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A T R E A T I S E O F T H E

Necessity and Frequency of Receiving the Holy Communion.

With a *Resolution of Doubts*
about it.

In *Three DISCOURSES* begun
upon *Whit-Sunday* in the Cath-
edral Church of *Peterburgh*.

To press the observation of the *Fourth*
Rubrick after the *Communion Office*.

By *S Y M O N P A T R I C K*, D. D.
Dean of *Peterburgh*, and One of His
Majesties Chaplains in Ordinary.

The Second Edition.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *J. M.* for *R. Royston*, Book-
seller to His most Sacred Majesty,
at the *Angel* in *Amen-Corner*,
M D C LXXXV.

IVth Rubrick after the
Communion.

*And in Cathedral and Collegiate
Churches and Colleges, where there
are many Priests and Deacons, they
shall all receive the Communion
with the Priest, every Sunday, at
the least, except they have a rea-
sonable cause to the contrary.*

To the Most Reverend
FATHER in GOD
WILLIAM
By Divine Providence
Lord Archbishop
OF
CANTERBURY,
HIS GRACE,

Primate of all *ENGLAND*,
and Metropolitan, one of His
Majestie's most Honourable
PRIVY-COUNCIL, &c.

May it please your Grace,
Having endeavoured, with
some success, to restore
the Weekly Communions, in
that Church to which I relate,

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and hoping for greater, by publishing these Discourses, which I made there upon that occasion ; I take the boldnes to send them abroad , under your *Grace's* Protection : that if they can do any good, all that shall receive it may understand unto whom , under God, they principally owe it, and stand obliged to acknowledge it.

For it was by your *Grace's* Fatherly Care , that I was put in mind of this great Duty, and exhorted to put it in practice : which produced these Meditations , wherein I have pressed it upon others. Who will be stirred up, I trust, by this means, to bless God for setting over them such a Faithful Pastor, as, by taking care to have this Sacred Food provided continually for them, seeks their *increase in true Religion, and their nourishment with all goodness.*

They are very blind who do not

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not see this to be a singular blessing; and very hard, whose hearts are not affected therewith: especially at such a time as this, when Religion calls for all the supports we are able to lend it; and teaches us, it desires no better, no other than it self, if we will but uphold it in our hearts.

Of which I beseech *the Lord of all power and might, the Giver of all good things*, to make every one of us so deeply sensible; that we may be no longer negligent in the principal office of it: but, in some measure, return unto that *First love* towards our blessed Lord and Saviour; from which we, as well as other Christian People, have long since shamefully fallen.

And may the same Good God, who put this thing into your Grace's heart, be pleased to bless and prosper all your pious de-

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signments : and prolong your dayes , which are spent in the study of the publick good, to see the ancient Devotion, and Virtue too , not only bud again in this Church , but flourish also , and bring forth Fruit in such abundance ; that it may be the joy of all its Friends, the terror of all its Enemies ; and, as the Prophet speaks of *Jerusalem* , a *Praise in the Earth*.

Then will this that your Grace hath done , be spoken of with Praise ; and Posterity will call you Blessed. Nay, to have but designed and attempted this, whatsoever the issue be , is so praiseworthy ; that it will make your Name no less honoured in future Generations, than that great Devotion, which we see combines in you with eminent Learning, that deep Humility , which cohabits with the highest Dignity , makes your

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your self to be reverenced in this.

With which Reverence, if the Confidence I take, in making this small Present to your *Grace*, seem inconsistent, I comfort my self with the long experience I have had ; that the best men are not always the hardest to please, but ever the easiest to forgive : As I doubt not your *Grace* will the presumption of this Address, from,

7th Sunday af-
ter Trinity,
1684.

May it please your *Grace*

Your Grace's

Most humble and

Most obedient Servant,

Symon Patrick.

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To

To my Beloved Friends
the Inhabitants of the
City of Peterburgh.

THE reason of Printing
these Discourses, is nothing
else, but the hope I have,
that by presenting to your Eyes, what
you heard lately with your Ears ; it
may make not only a new, but a more
lasting impression upon your hearts :
because you may have recourse to it
when you please ; and thereby not
only refresh your memories, but set-
tle in your minds the remembrance
of those things, which you perceive
have a power in them, to persuade you
to the constant performance of that
duty, which is the subject of this Book.

A weighty Duty it is, whose pra-
ctice I here most earnestly press : and
thereby invite you also to the enjoy-
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ment of a very high Priviledge ; the highest we are capable of, in this present State.

So it was accounted in ancient times ; when to be detained from it by sickness, or such like hindrance, was lookt upon as a very sore affliction : under which they groaned so heavily, that they were wont to be comforted, by having the Holy Sacrament sent home to them, from the Church, in token of Peace and Communion. But when any one was deny'd the Communion, being thought unworthy to receive it, they lookt upon it as the greatest punishment in the World. Such a punishment, that they could not rest quietly under it ; but, being full of grief and sorrow for those sins which kept them from such a Blessing, they made most humble supplications, with many tears and most lamentable cries, to be restored to the peace of the Church, and Communion with Christ in his benefits.

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They fell upon their Knees, and beseeched the forgiveness and the Prayers, and Intercessions of their Christian Brethren: whom they intreated, after a most lowly manner, to solicit for them, that they might no longer remain in that forlorn condition; banished from the presence of God, and from the Society of his People.

And till this was effected, they were in anguish of mind, and bitterness of Spirit: looking upon themselves as lost men, who had the sentence of death passed upon them: from which they begged, in sack-cloth and ashes, that they might be delivered.

Upon which things when I reflect, I am amazed, and cannot but cry out, saying; Good God! how are we fallen? What a dismal decay is there of Christian Piety among us? What an universal Lethargy hath seized us, in these Ages? Wherewithal

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we see men lying very contentedly under that, which the first Christians thought the heaviest Calamity: Nay, willingly restraining the holy Communion, and keeping themselves from it, as unworthy of the benefit; and yet are not at all troubled at it.

What an alteration is this? What new, or rather no Christianity is it; which teaches men now, to lie quietly in such a condition, as they themselves confess makes them unfit for Communion with God; and never to think of bewailing it, and being reconciled to Him, whom they have thus hainously offended?

This is so sad a consideration, that it ought to awaken all good men, to call upon their people, and earnestly beseech them, to remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do the first works. When there was no need to use so many arguments, as I have represented,

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sented, to prove this to be a Christian Duty ; nor so many motives, to persuade men to the frequent practice of it : but they ran forwardly to the holy Communion ; and were troubled, above measure, if they might not have the privilege to receive it.

There were no quarrels then raised in those days, against the manner of its Administration : no disputes against the posture, wherein it was received. The Ministers of Christ had not their pretious time taken up, in answering Objections, and satisfying Doubts and Scruples ; much less did they stand in need of the assistance of the Civil Power to inforce the practice of this duty. Which all took to be a Commandment of our Lord and Master, to commemorate his wonderful love, and shew forth his death and passion for our sakes ; and therefore was no less chearfully and readily obeyed, than if they had

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had been invited to the most delicious Feast, and promised to receive the greatest largesses in the World.

That it may be so again, is the design of publishing these Papers; in which I have represented those Truths, which, if they be weighed and laid to heart, will save us this labour for the future. For I have shown you a short way to be free from all fears, and doubts about this matter: which is, not to leave your selves in uncertainty whether you shall go to Heaven or no; but by making that sure, to make your selves fit for the Holy Communion: unto which you may go with an assured confidence, if you have any good hope to be admitted into the Society of the blessed in Heaven.

If that be out of doubt, you need not doubt of acceptance with Christ, at his holy Table. For which the best preparation is an holy Life; or a serious Resolution of it for the future,

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ture, if hitherto we have lived otherwise. What other Preparation had the Apostles, for the partaking of the first Eucharist, with our Blessed Lord and Saviour? What other could they have, when Christians received it every day? If we have this therefore, which is the main thing, let us not stand upon little niceties: nor waste that time in questioning and debating, whether we be fit or no; which ought to be spent in doing this and other Christian Duties, whereby we shall be every day fitter to have Communion with our Saviour.

Remember, that it is in actions of Piety, as it is in those of Policy. A Wisdom that is too scrupulous, commonly doth nothing for fear of doing ill. We read of Cities that have been taken, while the Senators were gravely deliberating how to preserve them. Even so is it here too; over-much niceties about preparation,

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bition, makes men never to be prepared. Therefore it is a fault; when it hinders that duty, which it keeps us still thinking how to perform.

Let us not confound our selves with words, but understand the sense of things: and then we shall not be perplexed, as many have been, in this business of Preparation.

Much less will any be affrighted from the holy Communion, by being commanded to kneel when they receive it. Which is no more than they do at their daily Prayers; and therefore should the rather be inclined to do here, when we pray and give thanks for the greatest blessings: which we cannot do in too humble a manner. We worship also and adore our Blessed Lord, in this holy action: and therefore, one would think, should be disposed of our selves, without any injunction, to fall down upon our Knees, in token of the worship which we give Him. Which is no Popish

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Popish Ceremony ; being not so much as enjoined by that Church in the act of receiving ; nor observed by the Pope himself (who when he receives, rather sits, or leans a little forward, upon his Throne) but an ancient devout Posture of the best Christians, which the people of the Roman Communion, observe, by long custom, without bidding : And therefore should much more be chearfully observed by us ; when we are enjoined to keep to the ancient reverence, wherewith the Saints of God received the pledges of our Saviours love.

Vouchsafe, I beseech you, to give this small Book, wherewith I present you, a careful Reading, and I doubt not it will free you, not only from these, but from all sorts of scruples, if any of you be troubled with them ; which now hinder many people, from the greatest duty, and comfort too, of our holy Religion.

Which

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Which if you would be persuaded to perform often ; the profit which would redound to you thereby, would be as great as the Credit which it would do to our Church and Religion. For no man can come seriously to the holy Communion ; but with some Resolutions of being better than he hath been : which Resolutions are not presently broken, but last for some time : And therefore if there were not too long a distance between one Communion and another, it is likely they might last for ever. For before the force of the first Reformation were quite lost, it would be backt and strengthned with a second : and so being re-inforced from time to time ; while it remained in some power, would become so firm, that it would never be broken.

Make a trial, I earnestly intreat you ; and suffer not this pains, which I have taken to serve you, to be thrown away, without that good effect.

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fect. Which it will not be, if you make the trial with the same seriousness, wherewith I have written this Treatise. In which you will meet with nothing to entertain the fancy, not so much as with fine words and elegant composure; but with good store, I think, of solid sense, to enlighten the mind, to inform the judgment, to pierce the heart, to stir up holy devotion; nay, to turn the will, and produce godly Resolutions: which if they be pursued, and have their fruit unto holiness, will in the end bring you to Eternal Life.

And that such Resolutions may be both produced and pursued, I will here add one observation more, for the removing the greatest of those hindrances to Holy Communion, which lie in the way of those who pretend to Religion. It is this:

That Doubts and Scruples, being the weakness, and sickness of the Soul, they

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they that readily entertain them, and then suffer them to remain there quietly and peaceably, are in a very ill case; nay, ought to look upon themselves as in a very dangerous condition. For it is a sign all is naught within; and that they deceive themselves with a vain opinion of their being Religious. For they who are truly so, groan under their doubts and scruples, as under a sore Disease; and therefore will not let them long dwell with them, but seek with all speed to have satisfaction: which when it is offered, they receive with all readiness of mind, and are not loth to be cured; but rejoice that they are set at liberty to serve God without impediment, and that there is nothing left in their Souls to oppose their duty.

Whereas bad people, in a quite contrary way, give admission to those scruples and doubts into their minds, with a secret pleasure; and having

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having entertained them, let them rest, and take up their lodging there very willingly : because they will plead their excuse, they fancy, for not doing their duty ; and be a defence to their laziness, Worldly mindedness, and other naughty affections.

In short, Doubts and Scruples never arise in good mens minds without grief, nor stay there without much trouble ; and therefore they long to be rid of them ; and are glad when they are discharged ; because they hinder the performance of their Christian Duty : but bad men not only listen to them willingly, but embrace them as welcome Guests, which they cherish, and never part withal, without difficulty, and some sort of inward displeasure ; because they desire the Worldly Spirit that is in them should not be left without all excuse, but have something to say for it self, when it is pressed by the force

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force of Religion, against its inclinations.

Search, and try your selves by this mark, and the Lord give you a right judgment in all things, for Jesus Christ his sake. In whom I remain

Your Faithful Servant,

S. Patrick.



Discourse

Discourse I.

THE NECESSITY OF Receiving THE Holy Communion.

TH E neglect of the Holy Communion of Christ's Body and Blood was so general, and so long continued, in the late distracted times, being laid aside in many whole Parishes of this Kingdom for near twenty years together, that in some Ages of the Church it would

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have been interpreted a downright Apostasie from Christ, and a renunciation of the Christian Faith.

And, though, blessed be God since the Happy Restauration of his Majesty to his Throne, and the settlement of the Church upon its ancient foundations, it hath not been so generally neglected; yet it is not so much frequented as it ought to be.

No, not upon such great and solemn dayes as this; when we are asseynbled to commemmorate that stupendous Grace, which our Lord purchased for us by his pretious Blood, and bestowed upon his Church, in sending the *Holy Ghost the Comforter*: to be a Witnes of his Resurrection and Exaltation at God's right hand; and to confirm us in the belief of all that he hath taught and appointed in his Church.

For we content our selves only with the *Common Prayers* (and I wish I could say, that they are duly attended) and with the *Sermon*: and then turn our backs on that part of the Divine Service, which is properly Christian; and consequently is above all other, most acceptable unto Christ, and unto his Holy Spirit.

Which

Which I shall therefore at this time press upon your Consciences ; as a means to revive that ancient Devotion, wherewith such Festivals as this was kept : which now, alas ! is wanting among us. And I shall do it from those words of St. Paul, *1 Cor. xi. 26.* wherein he recommends this duty unto us upon this particular account ; that *as oft as we eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, we do show the Lords Death till he come.*

In which words it is easy to observe these three practical truths. The two first whereof are plainly supposed ; and the other is affirmed and enjoyned.

I. The first thing here supposed is ; that it is a Christian Duty, *to eat this Bread, and drink this Cup,* here spoken of ; that is, to receive the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.

II. The second is, that it is a Christian Duty, which ought to be often performed. And then,

III. It is here plainly asserted, that when it is performed, the thing designed in it, and which we ought to aim at, is, *to show the Lord's Death till he come.*

The last of these will be sufficiently explained, in the handling of the other two; *viz.* the *Duty*; and the *Frequent repetition of it*: unto which I shall confine my Discourse. And of the *first* at this time.

I.

THAT it is a Christian Duty, incumbent upon every one of us, *to eat this Bread, and drink this Cup*: that is, to receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.

This is supposed in the words. Which are not to be understood as a mere permission, that we may do this, if we think good, and when we think good: but as a command of something we ought to do.

For when he tells us what it is we do, when we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, (in which we show forth Christ's Death) it plainly implies that it must be done, and is not left to our choice, whether we will show forth the Death of our Lord or no.

Of which more anon: when I have laid some other things before you, which

which will convince you, if they be considered, of the Obligation that lies upon you, to the serious performance of this Duty.

And for our clear and orderly proceeding, I shall cast my discourse into this method.

I. *First*, I shall show you, that there is a plain institution of this Sacrament; and a command that it should be received. And then,

II. *Secondly*, I shall show from the practice of the Apostles (after that time when they first received it with our Saviour) that it was no temporary command; but of Everlasting Obligation.

III. *Thirdly*, That there is more than their practice to interpret the meaning and obligation of this command.

IV. *Fourthly*, That in this Discourse of St. Paul to the *Corinthians*, there are evident proofs of the necessity of its performance.

V. *Fifthly*, That the very Text shows the same, by the end for which it was instituted.

VI. *Lastly*, That all these reasons are exemplified, by the practice of the Universal Church of Christ.

I.

And first, let it be considered that this Holy Sacrament, is a Divine Institution, Ordained, Commanded, and required by Christ Himself. Who, the same night that he was betrayed, took Bread and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to his Disciples, and said, *Take, Eat, This is my Body.* And he took the Cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *Drink ye all of it: For this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of Sins.* Matth. xxvi. 26, 27, 28.

Here is as manifest an Institution of this Sacrament, and as formal a Command to *take* and *eat* and *drink* what Christ then gave, as can be contrived in words. Unless they be plainer which we read in other places: for the Institution is recorded by the two next Evangelists, St. *Mark* and St. *Luke*; and here again, in this Chapter, by St. *Paul*. Which two last named say,

say, that our Saviour added these words in the Institution of this Sacrament; *This do in remembrance of me*, Luk. xxii.

19. 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. Which enjoin this duty by as express a Command, as those of old; *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*: And, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother*. Which may henceforth be blotted out of the number of the Commandments, if we take this to be none; *This do in remembrance of me*. For we can see no difference at all in the way and manner of the expressions, wherein these things are delivered: much less any such difference, as makes the former to be enacting words (as Lawyers speak) and the latter to enact nothing.

Now, if there were nothing but this express command alone, to be urged for this duty, one would expect, it should be sufficient to awaken every man to the performance, who hopes to find mercy with God, and to be saved by Christ Jesus. *For ye are my Friends* (saith he himself, who knew no other terms of it, Job. xv. 14.) *if ye do whatsoever I command you*. Which he had said before, in the very first

words of the Gospel for this day, Job. xiv. 15. *If you love me, keep my Commandments.*

How are we then the Friends of Christ? Where is our love to him; if we do not this, which is one of the things that he hath commanded, in as downright and solemn terms, as any other thing whatsoever? His Friends? No; *He that shall break one of the least of my Commandments, faith he again, and teach men so, he shall be least in the Kingdom of Heaven: that is he shall not have any share therein; but be slighted and rejected, as he slighted that Commandment,* Matth. v. 19.

And therefore what will become of those, (I beseech you consider it) who break not *one of the least*, but *one of the greatest* of his Commandments; as this certainly is? For it is his *last*, and dying Commandment; and therefore not the *least*. *The same night that he was betrayed, he took Bread, &c.* (saith St. Paul here in this Chapter, v. 23. The very night before he suffered, he instituted this Sacrament, and enjoined his Disciples to do this in remembrance of him: as a means no doubt to make

make all the rest of his Commands the better observed ; by preserving him, and his wondrous love perpetually in their memory. Where will they appear then, who refuse, or neglect to do this ? Or what will they be able to say for themselves, who have no regard to such a remarkable Commandment ?

For suppose it had come only in the form of a request, and not with the Authority of a Command ; could any sensible heart have refused to perform it ? What ? not yield to the desire of such a Friend, as well as such a Master ; who hath laid such obligations upon us, as none of mankind ever received, nor can receive, but from him alone ? This is strange : this is unaccountable. For all the World looks on him, as a man of a barbarous nature, void of all humanity ; who denies the last suit of a dying person ; though a mere stranger to him : especially, when it will put him to little or no trouble ; but rather be a pleasure to perform it. What a wretched Creature then is he, by what monstrous name shall we call him, who puts away from him the last

request of a dying Friend, and of a great Friend; one that hath merited ten thousand times more of him, than his request comes to? This adds the most hideous ingratitude to his Crime; and is moreover such a shameful violation of the sacred Laws of Friendship; that it makes him most odious both to God and man for ever.

And yet their guilt is not so small as this; who mind not those last words of our blessed Saviour, *Do this in remembrance of me.* Which are more than a *Request*; nay, more than a *command*: being his *last Will and Testament*, which he was about to seal with his Blood: and the *last Will* of him, who loved us better than his own life; who dyed, that we might live; who of his own accord laid down his life, which no body had power to take away. For he had all things, even Angels themselves at his command; and more particularly, was our most gracious Lord and Master, and hath the most unquestionable Authority over every one of us.

Who cannot therefore neglect this his last Will and Testament, without the

the most dreadful aggravations of such disobedience, nay contempt; as will remain without a Name, till that terrible day, when he shall come himself to charge men with this guilt of slighting his dying words.

Think of it I beseech you, what sort of command this is. And (to use the words of an Excellent Man) if you have any sense of shame, you *cannot*; any sense of duty, you *dare not*; any sense of love, you *will not* neglect it: but come as oft as you have opportunity, and *do this in remembrance of him*. Whose Command ought to over-awe you, as he is our Lord; since he might have expected to have prevailed with you, by his bare intreaties, as he is our Friend.

For it may be further added unto this consideration, that it is a command of a peculiar nature: having no reason for its performance but purely our regard to his will and pleasure, and our true love and affection to him; which is hereby tried, more than by other duties of Religion. Unto which there is something in nature to incline us; and it is made our manifest interest

terest by the frame of our Souls and Bodies, and by the constitution of that Society one man hath with another ; to be just (for instance) and merciful ; to be sober, faithful and grateful ; to live peaceably with our Neighbours, and obediently to our Governours ; and to commend our selves also to God by Prayer , and to give him thanks, &c. But of *doing this*, we should never have thought, had not our Lord required it. And therefore the performance of it, is a pure respect to him ; the mere effect of our Faith in him ; and a singular proof of the love and the reverence, which we bear towards him : as the neglect of it is an evident demonstration, that whatsoever natural vertue men may have, they have no Christian ; and so have no title to go to that blessed place , where Christ our Lord and Saviour is.

This is the *First* : upon which I have staid the longer, because it layes the Foundation of all that follows. For

II.

Secondly, Upon this *Precept* of Christ, the Apostles built their *practice*, after his

his Resurrection from the dead, and Ascension to Heaven ; from whence he sent the Holy Ghost to confirm that which he had instituted and ordained. For immediately upon this , on the very day that the Holy Ghost came down, the number of Christians being inlarged by the addition of three thousand Souls to the Church , all those Converts continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship , and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers. Acts ii. 42.

Which shows that they did not understand, the command of our Saviour about this matter, to be one of those, which the Hebrews call the *precept of an hour* (that is, to be observed only at that present time, when it was commanded) but to be of perpetual obligation, in all future times : For as soon as ever any man became a Christian , he lookt upon this as one part of his Christian duty ; as much as hearing the Sermons of the Apostles, and Prayers.

I am loth to spend the time , in going about to prove against vain Cavillers, that *by breaking of bread* is here meant,

meant, this holy action of receiving the Communion: and not their bare eating together. But to give full satisfaction in that matter, let it be briefly considered: *First*, that *Breaking of Bread* is here placed in the midst, between other holy actions, *Preaching*, *fellowship*, (or communicating to one anothers necessities) and *Prayers*; and therefore, in all reason, must be concluded to be it self of that nature: not a *common*, but an *holy action*.

And besides, *secondly*, their eating at a *common Table*, if it be at all mentioned in this Chapter (*Acts ii.*) under the phrase of *breaking bread*, is spoken of *v.46*. and therefore not intended here. No, nor there neither, I shall show hereafter, for even in those words also [*they continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, or at home, &c.*] the *breaking of bread* belongs to the holy Communion. And to put all out of doubt, thus the *Syriack* (an ancient Translation) understands it; expressly turning it thus, *in the Eucharist*. As it doth also *Act. xx. 7.* *Upon the first day of the week, when the Disciples came together*

together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, &c. that is, when they came to receive the Eucharist, (saith that Translation) which was a part of their Lords days work; nay, the principal part; for this was the thing for which the Disciples came together, and not merely to hear the Apostle preach. And who can give any reason, why it should not be so now, as it was then? when in familiar speech it was as usual with them to say, they would go to Church to receive the holy Communion; as it is with us to say in these days, we will go to Church to Prayers, or to hear a Sermon.

III.

But more than this, not only the practice of the Apostles, and first Believers, after they were divinely inlightned by the Holy Ghost, expounds the meaning and the obligation of this Precept to be perpetual: but Christ himself showed it so to be, after he went to Heaven, and was exalted at Gods right hand. For appearing to St. Paul, to make him one of his Apostles, and, in order

order to it, revealing himself and the whole Christian Religion to him, which he gave him commission and Authority to preach ; He declared this to be a part of his Will, and a piece of his holy Religion. *For I have received of the Lord* (saith he in this Chapter, v. 23, 24. &c.) *that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night he was betrayed, took bread ; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, Eat, This is my body which is broken for you ; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also, he took the Cup, saying, This is the New Testament, &c.*

Observe here, an evident proof, that what our Lord did with his Apostles at his last Supper, he intended should be done by them and by others, when he was gone. For sending one, who was not then with him, nor had any knowledge of him while he was on Earth, to preach his Gospel ; he gives him particular instructions about this matter ; to take care to see this done, in remembrance of him. So St. Paul (who was the man to whom he appeared, and gave a special Commission, after

after he went to Heaven) avows to the *Corinthians* in this place: telling them, that he delivered nothing to them but what he had received of the Lord: and what he delivered to them, was this, that they should do what the Lord Jesus hath done with his Apostles, in remembrance of him.

This he *received* from him: that is, it was of the Lords Institution, and to be practised by his order and special command; and therefore called, *the Lord's Supper*, v. 20. *When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper.* Where it is called the *Lord's Supper*, not because it was eaten by the Lord with his Apostles (for at that Supper the *Corinthians* were not present; nor was that now done, in this place where they came together) but because it was instituted by the Lord: both then, when he eat that Supper with his Apostles; and now again, when he appeared to St. *Paul*, and required him to see this practised, in the Churches which he converted. And accordingly, was now practised in this Church at *Corinth*; to whom this Discourse of St. *Paul* is directed.

IV.

In which we find many things more, to prove this to be a necessary Christian Duty : which was the *fourth* head, mentioned in the beginning.

I shall single out *two* which will make it evidently appear to all unprejudiced minds.

I. The *first* is very remarkable ; that the Apostle takes a great deal of pains, and spends a great deal of time, in showing the manner, how the holy Communion ought to be celebrated among them. Which he would not have done, if this had not been a necessary duty, incumbent on them, by virtue of Christ's Command, and a Divine Institution.

Do but consider this, I beseech you, and be at the pains to ponder at your leisure, how serious, earnest, and laborious the Apostle is here (in this eleventh Chapter of his Epistle) to make the *Corinthians* sensible, by a long Discourse about it, after what manner to approach to the Table of the Lord : reproving their scandalous behaviour

haviour at the Communion, directing them how to reform it, and make a due preparation to receive the benefit thereof. And then tell me, or rather tell your selves, was there any cause, for a reasonable man, to write so much to show how, and after what manner the thing should be done, if the very doing of the thing had not been necessary, and under the obligation of a Command?

Can the manner and way of doing an action, be matter of duty; and yet that action it self be no duty at all? Or can a man of common sense be very solicitous in giving directions, how men should order themselves in a place, and about a business; into which they may never come, but let it alone?

Can the Apostle be supposed, to say, so and so you ought to eat this Bread and drink this Cup; and yet there be no command tying them to eat it and drink it at all? And so and so you ought to prepare your selves to partake of Christs Body and Blood; and yet after that preparation, they might chuse, whether they would do the thing

thing for which they were to be prepared?

Surely we cannot imagine the Apostle to have had so much idle time to spare; nay, to be so impertinent, as to busy himself in ordering the circumstances of an holy action; if the action it self had not been a necessary, nay, a very weighty duty, and of exceeding great moment: which therefore he was highly concerned, and took due care, should be duly performed.

II. To which add this consideration: that had not this been a divine Institution, and, the practice according to it, a duty incumbent on them; it is not to be conceived, that the Apostle would have suffered the *Corinthians* to have run so great a hazard, as they did, by the rude manner of doing that action; if they might innocently have omitted it; and, without any guilt, not have done it at all. Nor would the *Corinthians* themselves have been so unreasonably cruel to their own Souls, as to have incurred the dreadful danger of Damnation and Death, by an unprepared participation of this Sacrament; if

if they could have satisfied themselves that it was no duty to participate ; or not of such consequence , but that it might with safety be let alone.

He that eateth and drinketh unworthily (saith the Apostle) *eateth and drinketh damnation to himself : and for this cause many are weak, and sickly among you, and many sleep.* That is , the divine judgment being passed against you, hath seized on you ; and struck many of you with sicknesses ; others with infirmities, aches and pains, and some with Death ; for your riotous eating of the Supper of the Lord. Doth it not concern you then, unless you be content to lie still under this scourge of God, till you be all cut off, to be better advised, and not expose your selves in this manner, to the wrath of God : which, it is plain by terrible Executions, is more than kindled against you ?

Now, unto what course doth he direct them , that they might avoid these Judgments ? Doth he advise them to abstain from the Holy Communion, for fear of prophaning it ! to forbear to come to the Table of the Lord , lest there he stretcht out his hand

hand against them, and gave them their Deaths wound?

This had been the shortest, and the safest way, according to the ignorant resolutions men make in this present Age, to prevent the danger of Damnation: unto which the Apostle, no doubt, would have charitably directed them; if he had not known that the thing it self was a duty, and such abstinence from it a sin.

He could not otherways have refrained, when he beheld the Sword of Divine Vengeance thus hanging over their Heads, and many already lie bleeding under it, being stricken down to the ground by Sickneses, Plagues and Death; he could not I say in this lamentable case have abstained, from calling to them with the greatest earnestness and compassion; saying, Why do you thus venture your Souls and Bodies to destruction? Why do you not rather stay away, and wholly forbear to approach to the Table of the Lord, where you are in danger to be undone, for your unworthy receiving the sacred pledges of Gods love?

But

But we hear no such language, because the Apostle had not *thus learnt Christ*; nor *thus received of the Lord*. Who commanded and expected that they should not abstain from the Sacrament (as the manner now is) but *come to it*: not rudeley indeed, as they did, but in a holy, decent and prepared manner. Which it had been in vain to discourse of; if it would have been as well, or would have sufficed, to abstain from the act of receiving.

This was an invention, not thought of in those early dayes: when they took themselves not to be Christians, if they did not frequent the Holy Communion; as St. Paul proves they were not good Christians, if they did not take care to come in an holy manner unto it.

That's the thing to which he presses them; and the only way, he knew of, to avoid Damnation. Abstaining from the Communion, would not secure them: but let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup, ver. 28. Not to eat and drink of that holy food, he could not give them a licence. He had no such

such Authority ; but lay under an obligation to enjoin the doing of the thing, and to press it earnestly : as a duty that could neither be safely omitted, nor practised without serious Examination of themselves, that they *might not come together to condemnation*, v. 34. To *come together* for this purpose, to eat and drink that Bread and that Cup, there was a necessity : their only care was, that it might not be *to condemnation*.

Which things, being well considered, do convincingly demonstrate, that this is not only a duty, but a weighty duty, strictly enjoyned, and not to be omitted : no, not in that Church, where the profane doing of it, had brought down Death and destruction upon them from Heaven.

V.

The same is evident from the end, for which our Lord instituted this Sacrament, and commanded us to receive it : which is, *the publication of the Lord's Death till he come*. That's the meaning of this word *καταγγέλλετε*, *Ye do show* : *you*

you do publish, the word signifies, and tell it abroad: you profess this, and declare it to all the World, that Christ died for you, and is Lord over you, having purchased you by his Blood; and that you own him so to be, and are the Servants and Worshippers of that *Iesu*; who gave himself to be Crucified, and to die for you.

This is the general meaning of this holy action. Wherein we publickly own Christ, and profess his Religion: and give it out to all the World, who see what we do, that we are his, and that we are sensible of it, nay, glory in it, and intend to continue his for ever.

Now, who can have the confidence to call himself a Christian, and not think he stands bound thus to own Christ Crucified? And therefore he is bound to do that, whereby he doth own him; which is to receive the holy Sacrament. Which as often as we do, we show forth the Lords Death: and as often as we neglect, we do as good as say we are ashamed of him, and of his Cross; or that we repent of our Christian Profession.

For if to do this, be to show forth

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Christ's

Christs Death, then not to do it, is to stifle and smother it, as much as in us lies: so that no such thing as the Death of our Lord should be published, or known in the World.

This I am sure is a true consequence: and our neglect of this duty, will be thus interpreted by our blessed Lord, when he shall come to take cognizance of it.

Why? will some say, we testify the contrary, every time we say the Creed: when we make an open and solemn confession of our Faith in him.

But let such persons observe, how they argue in this against themselves. For our Lord, in whom they profess to believe, requires that we should not merely in *words*, though never so express, but in plain *actions* also represent his Death and Passion for our sakes; and thereby our high obligations to him.

That's the Doctrine of the Apostle in this place. For to what end do you break the Bread, but to show the *breaking*, i. e. the wounding and crucifixion of the Lords Body? And to what end do you pour out the Wine; but to represent

present the *shedding* of the Lords Blood, by those wounds he received for our sake? And for what end do you eat that Bread, and drink that Cup, but to shew that we are made one with him, and have Communion with him in his Death and Sufferings?

This is the *general* end of this Sacrament, gratefully to commemorate the Death of Christ; to show, express, declare, and publish his Death for us, and our interest in it, in plain and significant actions. Which not being performed, in obedience to his Command, the Faith which we profess in him doth but condemn us of shameful infidelity to him.

As for the *particular* ends of it, they are as many as the uses are, which we can make of his Death and Passion. Wherein, whatsoever love God the Father showed unto us, in giving his dearly beloved Son to die for us; whatsoever kindness God the Son expressed, in offering himself freely unto the Death, and making himself a Sacrifice for our sins: and whatsoever confirmation God the Holy Ghost hath since given us of this love, and this kindness;

ness ; it is all here commemorated.

Whatsoever worship, honour, and service is due to our ever-blessed Redeemer, and most bountiful Benefactor, it is all here acknowledged ; and after a most peculiar manner, and with a special respect to him, performed.

Whatsoever strength we can derive from our Feasting with Christ upon his Sacrifice, and from the oblation we make of our selves, Souls and Bodies unto him, with most powerful Prayers and Thanksgivings : whatsoever comfort we can enjoy in Communion with God, and in Communion with his Church : whatsoever Peace we can have in renewing our Covenant of Friendship with him, in remission of sins, in receiving the power of the Holy Ghost, in the hopes of eternal life, in all holy intercourses between Heaven and us : all this is to be expected, and may be obtained in the Celebration of this Holy Sacrament.

And therefore as this one thing, the Annunciation or publishing of Christ's Death and our relation to him, is the general end ; and these comforts, these establish-

establishments in Faith, and hope, and love and obedience, are the particular ends of this Institution: So all these lay a strong obligation upon us duly to observe it; unless we be content to renounce our interest in Christ: who hath made this the most solemn badge, and authentick mark of our Christianity; and the great means of conveying to us the benefits of his Death and Passion, as well as a pledge to assure us thereof.

And this one argument alone, taken from the end of its Institution, is sufficient to convince us that this Sacrament was intended by Christ, to be continued in his Church *till he come* (as my Text speaks) that is, till his last coming to judge the World: for till then it will be useful, nay necessary for all these holy ends which I have briefly named. And whosoever he be that hopes for mercy at that dreadful day, without the careful performance of this duty, is a presumptuous person, and vainly expects it: because he lives in the neglect of the very best way of preparing himself, for that great account, which must then be made of all our actions.

C 3 VI. But

VI.

But now let us suppose, that the words of the Institution had been so ambiguous, that they might possibly (if we had had no further explication of them) have been thought to be limited to that particular Feast which Christ did eat with his Disciples, and extended no further: yet the practice of the Apostles, and the practice of the Church in the Apostolical times, and in all succeeding times ever since (which are the best Interpreters of the Scriptures) do expound the words to be a lasting Institution; and an Institution of such moment that it ought to be most punctually observed.

And did not Christ's own Apostles, think you, understand their Masters meaning, when he instituted this Sacrament? Or if they had not understood him then, would they not afterward have understood him; when the spirit was so plentifully poured out upon them, that they discovered the greatest secrets: even the thoughts and designs of mens hearts?

Hath

Hath the universal Church in, and after those times, and during all Ages since, lived in an error; and taken up an unnecessary practice, or made too much stir about it, and been too busy and officious in it? Was there not in this very Church of *Corinth* (as the Apostle shows in the next Chapter) a miraculous abundance of miraculous gifts? *the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of knowledge, the spirit of faith, the gifts of healing, of working miracles, of prophesying, of discerning spirits, of divers kind of tongues, of interpretation of tongues?* And could not all those gifts, all those spiritual powers, and supernatural assistances, enable them to understand the words of Christ's Institution? Was not that indeed, the true *Age of the Spirit?* Were they not infinitley more inlighned, than any can pretend to be now, or hope to be hereafter? And could they not discover by their illuminations (if it had been true) that which some vain *Enthusiasts* dream of, that where there was such plenty of the Spirit, there was no need of such outward Ordinances, as the Sacrament of the Lord's

Supper? Could they not see this so clearly, and be so sensible of it, as that they should not have been so much concerned, as they were, about the practice of this duty, in that Church, if there was no need of it, or our Saviour never intended it should be of much moment? Nay, as that they should not have with such danger to themselves (as I noted before) have repeated it in their Church, if our Saviour never intended any such repetition?

Surely, these things carry such evidence in them, that to add more light, in so clear a case, would be (as we say) to hold a Candle to the Sun. And therefore I shall here make an end of my proof: supposing I have said rather too much than too little in this argument; and that you stand fully convinced, the Celebration of this holy Communion, is not only of divine Institution, to be used by the Church in all Ages, but must of necessity be duly practised by us, if we hope to be saved.

And if that be true, hearken then I beseech you what follows thetupon.

I. What

I.

What shall we then think of those, who live in the constant neglect of it?

Suffer me to propose this single plain question to you. Whether the wilful continuance in any known sin, be not a damnable state? A state of direct opposition to our Saviour; and consequently a state wherein there is no Salvation? Can this be denied? and it is as undeniable, that a constant neglect of a known Precept of Christ, a Precept so universally owned, so universally practised, as you have heard, in the Church of God; is a wilful sin. What is it else? or what can make a sin wilful, but acting against a clear knowledge, and conviction, and means and opportunities, of doing otherways?

Consider of it, I beseech you, again and again. If wilful sins do not actually damn, being continued in; let us know, for what sins they are, for which men are damned: or do you think there is any such thing as damnation at all? Certainly, if there

be damnation, it is for wilful sins: and if there be wilful sins, they are sins deliberately committed against a known Law: and if there be any known Law among Christians, this is one; that they ought to receive this holy Sacrament, in remembrance of their Lord and Masters Death for them: and therefore the constant, the affected, the upbraided, the reproved, and yet not reformed, omission of this duty, is most certainly a deliberate, nay a presumptuous omission of it; or else there is no such thing as presumption in the World.

What will you think then of yourselves, I ask again, if from time to time, from month to month; nay, from year to year, you wilfully neglect a plain, an evident, an undoubted Precept of our blessed Lord and Saviour? a Precept commanding us to commemorate his Death, to represent his Passion, to admire his Love, to praise his kindness, to partake of his Graces, to share with him in his comforts, to knit our selves faster to him in holy Obedience, and to rejoice in hope of feasting with him and all the Company

Company of the blessed in his Heavenly Kingdom?

If you have not been hitherto convinced of this duty, your sin is the less; and may in some measure admit of an excuse. But if, being now convinced, you stand out, and still neglect the performance of it; then can you not in any wise have the least excuse for your wilful disobedience. And if you be not now convinced, by these things which have been represented to your minds; I must say, it is because you wilfully refuse, because you will not receive conviction. And this wilful refusal to be convinced, this shutting your Eyes against the clear light wherein this duty is shown to you, is still another wilful sin; added to the presumptuous neglect of the holy Communion.

II.

Satisfy your selves about what I have now proposed: determine what is like to become of you, if you continue in a wilful sin (as the neglect of the holy Communion most certainly is, when

when the will of Christ, in an express Law commanding it, is made known to you and pressed upon you) and then I may be the less earnest in beseeching you, to remain no longer under this heavy guilt. For how can you, with your Eyes open, run your selves into Eternal Damnation? what need is there that I should beseech you, not to throw your selves headlong into the Fire that never shall be extinguished? It is sufficient to intreat you once more, to consider what hath been said, to believe it, and to keep it in mind: and then you will make an amends for former neglects, by a more careful and zealous performance of this duty, in time to come.

Especially if you consider how by neglecting this duty, you neglect all those invaluable blessings, which are represented, offered, and communicated to us in the right performance thereof.

This is the only Argument whereby I shall further urge you: but I will press it in a few particulars.

I. And

I. And *first*, there is nothing wherein all Christians do more universally agree than this, that God in giving his Son to die for us, demonstrated the greatest love that was ever shown to mankind. Which incomparable love we all agree likewise, is represented, expressed and recommended to us, in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. And can we think fit then, to neglect this holy Communion? For do we not therein neglect and undervalue that wonderful love, which in the holy Communion is most effectually represented, laid before us, and exhibited unto us?

Is the love of God so inconsiderable a thing, as to be slighted and passed by with careless neglect? Is the Death of Christ, wherein that love appeared, so small a thing, as to be forgotten, or seldom thought of; and that although he hath instituted a Sacrament on purpose for its Commemoration? And do we not forget and slight it, when we regard not that Institution, and make no such Commemoration?

I know how loth men are to yield to these

these convictions; and how desirous they are to support themselves in a belief, that they neither undervalue that love, nor forget this Death, though they do not attend at the Table of the Lord. For they remember both, they say, in their own private thoughts; and give God thanks for his inestimable love in giving Christ to die for them.

But suppose they say true; that they have such a sense of God and of our blessed Saviour; as not altogether to let them slip out of their minds, nor wholly forget their benefits: yet let them weigh this seriously, that where a known divine institution, appointed on purpose for the Commemoration of Christ's Death, and of God's love therein manifested, is neglected; it must be confessed that the same love of God, and Death of Christ is in a very sinful degree undervalued and forgotten. For no Friend will think himself remembred by him; who lays aside that very thing, which he left him, and solemnly desired him to wear, in token of his remembrance.

Let such men consider also, that they stand

stand bound not only to remember or call to mind Christs Death privately, but openly to make that solemn and publick Commemoration of it, which is commanded by our blessed Lord. And in like manner, it is not sufficient to have a value of Gods love; but we ought to show our esteem of it, in the practice of that Institution, wherein that love is signally represented to us.

In brief; we deceive our selves if we imagine we remember Gods love in the Death of Christ as we ought to do; while we do not express and show our remembrance by that sign and token which he hath appointed as a Testimony thereof.

If we do it not in this way; He will look upon us as forgetful of him and of his love.

II. And by forgetting that, it is not to be conceived how much mischief we do to our selves and others. For we are all agreed that the consequence which St. John draws from what hath been now said, is good and strong; *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also*

to love one another, 1 Joh. iv. 11. Which mutual love the Apostle presses by such Arguments in that Epistle, as demonstrate a man hath nothing of God in him, who wants this grace? which contains, at least, one half of the duty of a Christian.

Do we not need then to have this love inkindled, or rather inflamed, nourished and increased in us, by all means? And is there any means so effectual, as the consideration, the solemn consideration how the great God hath loved us, though utterly unworthy of his love, nay deserving his heaviest displeasure? And where is this represented so lively to us, as in the holy Communion? Which Christ hath also appointed on purpose, to be a sacred Bond of love, unity, peace and concord among Christians; by their all eating of one and the same Bread, and drinking of one and the same Cup.

Which while they neglect, how can they pretend to the love of God? or how can they hope to have this mutual love one to another, rooted in their hearts? when they never or seldom

com-

communicate together in the most holy things? never own that they are members one of another; nor link themselves together by that common tye of Charity, which their Lord hath instituted, and commanded them to use, for this very end, and among others; that they may be knit together in one body, be of one mind and heart, and live in peace?

No, they are all broken in pieces, they are torn in sunder, and continue so; and hate and malign, and bite and devour one another: and that with a most implacable rage and malice, to the great scandal of Religion; the spoiling of humane Society; the danger of over-turning Government; and thereby ruining all outward comforts.

And shall we heighten this guilt by adding the aggravation to it, *that we love to have it so?*

If we have any kindness left one for another, nay any kindness for our selves, let us not refuse the means of a cure: this Sovereign means, which alone will prove an effectual remedy. Being a remedy of Gods own prescription

tion and appointment, for the quenching all our unnatural heats, and the killing all our unchristian hatreds, and the burying of all our animosities and quarrels, so that they shall never rise again: Or if they do, be immediately extinguished, and laid again in their Graves, by laying a new obligation upon our selves in this Sacrament, to love one another; *and to walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour, Eph. v. 2.*

III. In which Sacrament I might represent how many comforts there are contained, besides those of love; comforts infinitely more satisfactory, than those vain, those perishing pleasures, of which sensual men are so greedy, that they make them neglect this holy Communion: and thereby lose those divine, those heavenly joys, which Christ, in the serious use of it, imparts unto his members.

But, to shorten this Discourse, let it suffice to ask you, what is there in the love of God towards Mankind, which

which you can think more valuable, than the *Covenant of Grace*, by which alone, you have the promise of remission of sins assured unto you? And consequently, how can you forget that most pretious blood, which ratifies, which confirms and seals that gracious Covenant? Or how can you neglect that special means, which the love of God our Saviour hath ordained, for the preserving the remembrance of his most pretious blood-shedding fresh in your minds.

If you do truly remember that blood which was shed, that body which was broken for you; you must at the same time judge it fit and necessary, to demonstrate you remember it, by making that Commemoration of it, which our Lord requires: and not neglect to see that represented to the Eye, and expressed by real actions lively signifying the Death of Christ; which you pretend gratefully to commemorate in your hearts.

It is much to be feared, that they do but deceive their own Souls, who pretend to the one without the other. For did not God frame and fashion you

you in your Mothers Womb? And doth not he who framed you there, know your frame and your mould better than you can do your selves? And did he not therefore appoint this outward representation of his love, in the holy Communion, because he knew otherwise you would not be sufficiently sensible thereof? What other reason can there be assigned for this Institution, but the wise goodness of God; who knows that divine things accommodated to sense, do, by affecting the Eye, better affect the heart, than it would be affected without such sensible applications? This is the reason, why he hath made spiritual things to become in great measure sensible; in accommodation to our nature, and compliance with our frame; which he best knows, because it is of his own contrivance. Who hath clothed our Spirits with Flesh: and therefore moves the inward powers by outward signs. Which if we slight, or neglect these means of being affected with spiritual things, which God who most perfectly understands how our minds may be best moved, hath accommodated

dated and appointed for that end : it is evident we despise the Wisdom of God ; or are vainly conceited of our selves : and presume to think that we can be as well affected, without these outward means and sensible helps which he hath instituted for our spiritual improvement.

A strange presumption, this ! But which every one is guilty of, who contents himself with bare thinking of Christ and of his love in dying for us : without the use of those sensible signs, which he hath appointed, to awaken our minds, unto a more lively and deep apprehension and sense of his love, than any thing else can give us.

IV. To all which considerations let this be added ; that the great support and comfort, the very life of every Christian Soul, is to be in a state of Friendship with God ; by continuing in the Holy Covenant we have made with him , and he with us in Christ Jesus. If this be not preserved carefully ; all true joy in this World is lost together with it.

Now, do you not find your selves
too

too prone to break your Baptismal Vow; and thereby to violate that Covenant, wherein you stand engaged, and sacredly promised to keep? And shall not that Covenant, after you have violated it, be solemnly and speedily renewed; that the breach between God and you may be healed, and you may notwithstanding look upon him, as your Father? And is not the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood appointed for this renewal? Do you know any other solemn way of being reconciled again?

What account then can be given of it, that so many having broken this Covenant, are not at all concerned to renew it? but remain separated from God, and holy Communion with him? How come we to be so careless of our Souls, so negligent of God, so unconcerned in the Covenant of Grace, as wilfully, continuedly, from time to time to forbear that Holy Ordinance; wherein not only this Covenant is renewed, but so many mercies of God, as you have heard, commemorated and represented; so many joyes, so many comforts and spiritual assistances communicated unto us?

There

There is no account to be given of this matter ; no reason that can be assigned but only this : that men will not seriously consider, either their duty, or their interest. Or if they do, when they are clearly represented to them, they forget and lay aside all those considerations ; and do not immediately pursue them, whether they would lead them. And so they turn to something else ; which takes up their thoughts and their time, and engages their affections : till they be carried away Captive by the Lusts of the Flesh and of the World ; beyond the power of any means, that we know of , to rescue them from destruction.

But I hope better things of those, who duly attend to what hath been said ; and that all those who have not now prepared themselves for this Holy Duty , of showing forth the Lords Death, whereby he purchased, among other blessings, the great gift of the Holy Ghost (which it would have been most proper , on this day , to have most solemnly acknowledged) will speedily set themselves about it ; and

and be ready against the next opportunity: that is, against the next Sunday, or at least the next after that; and so for the time to come be careful to perform this duty, as oft as the Christian Religion requires.

Which, I shall demonstrate in the next Discourse, is much oftner than men imagine.

The End of the first Discourse.

Discourse

Discourse II.

THE FREQUENCY OF Holy Communion.

HAVING demonstrated in the foregoing Discourse, that it is a duty indispensably lying upon all Christians, to receive the holy Sacrament of Christs Body and Blood; a duty of great weight and importance; for the neglect of which I do not see, how we can atone, by the performance of any other Duty whatsoever; I proceed to show, that it is a duty which ought to be frequently repeated; *for as oft as ye eat this Bread (faith the Apostle) and drink*

drink this Cup, ye do show the Lords Death till he come. Which plainly insinuates, that they did this often: and that it was their Duty so to do, shall be the subject of this present Discourse.

And here now, in the very entrance of it, I must acknowledge, that we are not told either in this place of Scripture, or any other, *how often* we ought to Communicate, or how frequently the Church ought to make this Commemoration of Christ's Death and Passion for our sake.

Of which observation men now make a very bad and preposterous use. For finding that our Lord hath only said, *This do, in remembrance of me*, but no where said, *when, at what time, or times*, it is to be done, they imagine that they satisfy his will, if they do not wholly withdraw themselves from his Table, though they come never so seldom thither.

And truly, by this sort of reasoning, that because we are no where told how often we should *do this*, we need only take care to do it sometime or other; it may be thought sufficient, if we do it

it but once in our whole life. And so dangerous are such conceits, which men frame to themselves from such Observations, that vast numbers (though otherwise not wicked) live in a constant neglect of this Duty, till they come to die: and then, upon their Death-Beds calling for this Sacrament and receiving it, they think they have fulfilled the will of our Lord, in *doing this*, as he hath commanded; because, though he hath commanded it to be done, he hath no where commanded *when*, or *how oft* it should be done.

From whence we may certainly conclude, that this is a false consequence, which men draw from the silence of the holy Scriptures in this matter: because it is so dangerous and pernicious, that, in a manner, it quite destroys our Religion, by taking away this part of it, which is the principal; and making it unnecessary as long as a man lives, so he be but sure to receive when he is at the point of Death.

Of that indeed no man can be assured: but supposing he doth receive

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the Communion at the very last gasp, he is thus far safe and not guilty of the breach of this Commandment, if this consequence be true : That because our Saviour hath no where appointed the time, or said how frequently we should *do this in remembrance of him*, we do comply with his Institution, provided we do it sometime or other.

Now to destroy this false notion, from whence such absurdities flow, I shall in the *first* place show you ; That the quite contrary, naturally and necessarily follows from this observation, of our Saviours appointing no time, for the performance of that which he required to be done in remembrance of him.

From whence mens wicked hearts draw this conclusion, as I have said, That it may suffice to do this now and then, though never so seldom.

I.

But the true, the genuine, and honest conclusion which follows from thence is this: that our Lord having named no fixed settled time or times for the perform-

performance of this holy action, it is an argument that he designed and appointed it as a constant, common, and ordinary part of the Christian Service, which he would have performed in his Church at all times.

Let those words of Christ, *this do in remembrance of me*, be well weighed, and there is no man can infer less from thence, than that if he had intended this should be done only at some such great and solemn times, as the *Passover* was among the Jews (when he first instituted this Feast, and eat it with his Disciples) he would not have suffered us to be ignorant of his meaning, but told us in plain terms, that upon some certain days, and at some extraordinary Assemblies, this should not be forgotten. But that he having named no time whatsoever, we ought to look upon his words, as instituting this holy action to be a part of that Worship, Honour and Service, which he expected from his people in all their Religious Assemblies.

For being ordained *in remembrance of him*, it is most reasonable to think he intended this *Commemoration* should

be as constantly made, as they met together to acknowledge him for their Lord and Saviour, and only Mediator with God the Father.

And being a *Commemoration* ordained instead of all the Sacrifices, whereby, under the Law, they daily implored the mercies of God, or gave thanks for them; it ought, in all Conscience, to be as *continual* a rite of Religious Worship as those Sacrifices were.

And thus, when men had upright hearts, and unbiassed affections, they did honestly understand our Saviours meaning; and accordingly made this a constant part of their Divine Service: Which is the next thing I would desire you to observe. For I would not have you to rely merely on my reasonings and inferences (though I verily think this would appear a true way of arguing, and a right conclusion unto any unprejudiced mind, if we had no more to justify it) but as a further evidence of this; nay, as a full conviction that we ought so to take it, I beseech you seriously to consider, that

II. Thus

II.

Thus the Apostles and the first Christians understood the meaning of our blessed Saviour in this Institution. And can we have any better Expositors of his words, any surer directors of our practice, than such great Servants of his, who were filled with the Holy Ghost? who never met together to worship God, and our Saviour, but this was a part, and a principal part too, of the service they performed in those Assemblies. If I can make this good, the other will follow: for there can no other account be given, why they did this as constantly as they assembled themselves for Divine Service, but because they took that to be our Saviours meaning and intention, when he said, *This do, in remembrance of me.*

Now there is nothing more apparent in the holy story, than this, that *the Apostles, and those whom they first converted, made this a daily part of the offices of Religion.* For we read that when three thousand Souls joined

D 4 themselves

themselves to the Church upon the day of Pentecost, they continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of Bread, and Prayers, Act. ii. 42. Where breaking of Bread, I proved before, signifies their receiving the Eucharist; and now observe, that the words we translate continued stedfastly (which in the Greek are *καὶ περιστατέρας*) signify, that they were constant and assiduous in this holy action. For the word imports frequency, as appears from other places; particularly from Rom. xii. 12. Where there is the same word in the Apostles Command for Prayer; and we translate it, continuing instant in Prayer. And Coloss. iv. 2. it is joined with watching thereunto with thanksgiving. From which Observations we gain this; that as frequent and instant as they were in Prayer, so frequent and instant they were in breaking of Bread: for they were *περιστατέρας* constant and unwearied in them, both alike.

Now what this constancy or frequency was, is expounded in the 46. verse: where St. Luke faith, they continued

tinued (the same word again) *daily* with one accord in the Temple, and breaking Bread from house to house, or at home; as the word is better translated in the Margin of our Bibles. Where we see that *breaking of Bread at home*, in their own private Houses, was as *daily*, as their going to the *Temple* publickly: and can be meant of nothing, but their receiving the holy Communion *every day*. For no man can so much as imagine a reason, why breaking of Bread should be mentioned as their daily practice at home, together with their resort to the *Temple*-service abroad; but to signify that they communicated among themselves, in the service of the Eucharist or Holy Communion, proper to the Faith of Christians; as they communicated with the Jews in the service of the *Temple*, common to all the Disciples of *Moses*.

You may impute this, it is possible, to the warmth of their zeal: but remember withal, that this zeal was grounded upon knowledge; which they wanted not in those dayes. And the knowledge they had of Christian

D \$ Religion

Religion taught them ; that when our blessed Saviour commanded them to do this , in remembrance of him , naming no time when it should be done , he meant it should be done always in their Christian Assemblies : as the perfection and Crown of that Service , for which they assembled .

III.

And indeed , if we had not had these records of the practice of the Apostles , and of the first Christians , to explain the meaning of our Saviours Institution ; yet we should have had reason to think it was so in the Apostles days (and therefore the meaning of our Saviour) because this practice of receiving the holy Communion every day , continued in the Church for some Ages . I cannot say , in every place (for we have no Records of that , but rather of the contrary) but in many places , and in the most famous that are come to our notice ; and where the vigour of Christian Religion remained ; and where they were awakened , by more than ordinary dangers , to consider their obligation . Thus

Thus we find St. *Cyprian* in his Exposition of the Lords Prayer , takes that Petition, *give us this day our daily Bread*; to signify, in the spiritual sense, our desire to be fit to receive the *Eucharist every day, for the food of Salvation*. And in his Epistle to the Church of *Thibaris*, speaking of a more grievous and fiercer fight of persecution hanging then over their heads, he tells them, therefore the Souldiers of Jesus Christ ought to fortify and arm themselves well against it, with an uncorrupt Faith, and robust Vertue ; considering that they did for this end *quotidie calicem Christi sanguinis bibere, &c. every day drink the Cup of Christ's Blood, that they might also be able to shed their own blood for Christ's sake*. In which words he addresses his Discourse to the *Laicks*, as well as the *Clergy*: exhorting all the faithful unto the constancy of Martyrdom ; which Men, Women and Children indured.

Nay, long after this, we learn from St. *Hierom* (in his Apology to *Pammachius* for his Books against *Jovinian*, and other places) that this Custom continued at *Rome*; and in *Spain*; as well

well as in *Africk*: where St. *Austin* tells us (in his famous Epistle to *Januarius*) that in his time, some did *quotidie communicare*, &c. daily communicate of the body and blood of our Lord; though others, he acknowledges, did it only on certain days. St. *Basil* also begins his Epistle to *Cæsaria Patritia* in this manner; to communicate every day, and partake of the holy body and blood of our Lord Christ, καλὸν καὶ ἐπωφελός, is a commendable and profitable thing: and then adds, that they did communicate four times a Week in his Church, on the Lords day, Wednesday, Friday, and the Sabbath, that is Saturday; and on other dayes, if the memory of any Martyr fell upon them.

Nay, three or four Ages more after this, such a sense of this Devotion remained, that *Walafridus Strabo* (in his Book of Ecclesiastical Affairs, c.20.) fayes, it seems to be very full of reason, that Christians, especially Clergy-men, should every day be employed in divine Offices; and, when some very grievous spot of mind or body doth not hinder, receive the Lords Bread and Blood, without which we cannot live: imitating the wholome

wholsome diligence of the primitive Church; concerning whom we read in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that they persevered in the *Apostles Doctrine* and fellowship, and in breaking of Bread and Prayers: and a little after, they continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking Bread from House to House, &c. quoting the words I named before.

All which, and much more that might be said, make it apparent, that the Church in the best times, and the best men in the Church, in after Ages, lookt upon this as an ordinary part of Christian Worship: which Christ intended should be performed in his Church, as oft as they assembled for Divine Service. And what other ground could they have for it, but this; that Christ having confined it to no time, they thought, in reason, it should be taken for a duty he expected it from them at all times, when they came to worship him, and make their thankful acknowledgment unto him?

IV. And

IV.

And truly, we can gather no less from the very nature of this holy action; which sufficiently shows it was our Saviours meaning, that it should be a daily part of the Churches Service. It being, as all know, a solemn Thanksgiving unto God, and a Form of Prayer and Petitioning (which every one confesses are acts of Worship to be constantly performed) and also a commemoration of that upon which the efficacy of all our Prayers and Thanksgivings depends, *viz.* the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross: which is here likewise represented unto God, as that which appearing always before him in the Heavens, intercedes for us, and makes all our Sacrifices acceptable to his Majesty.

And besides all this, is the peculiar worship which the Church gives unto Christ, as a grateful acknowledgment of his unparallel'd love, in laying down his life for us, to purchase the most inestimable benefits; which he herein also

also assures unto us, and bestows upon us. Which is in part declared in these words, upon which I have built my Discourse, wherein we are told the end of this holy Sacrament is, to *show* or *publish the Lords Death*: that is, *show it with praise*; predicate, extol and magnify (as the word *καταγγέλλειν* imports) proclaim with our highest praises, the loying kindness of the Lord, in the glorious work of our Redemption, through his most precious blood. But is more fully declared in the very words of the Institution, when he laid, *Do this in remembrance of us*: which show, that our doing this, is the peculiar honour, we do our blessed Lord; by making a publick commemoration that he took our nature upon him, that he died for us, that he obtained thereby a glorious Victory over all our Enemies; that he purchased for himself and for us immortal glory; and is now at Gods right hand, in full power to bestow it upon us. In memory of all these things, saith our Saviour, *do this*; that when I am dead, I may always live in your hearts; and the knowledge

knowledge of all these things, may go down to all posterity; and be commemorated from one Generation unto another for ever, with thankful praises: but especially the memory of my *Death* may be transmitted to them; and be celebrated with continual acknowledgments.

For it was but fit that he should be publickly honoured in that, which when he suffered, exposed him to the greatest contempt. And no doubt it was the design of God in appointing this Rite of holy worship, to have his Death commemorated with Everlasting praises, which, for the present, had brought him into the utmost disgrace. To which purpose is that passage, in an *Easter Sermon*, ascribed to *Cesarius Bishop of Arles*: “Because “he intended to remove out of our “sight the body which he had taken, “and to place it in Heaven; it was “necessary that in the same day, he “should consecrate for us the Sacra-“ment of his Body and Blood, *to the* “end, *that we should honour by the type,* “*that which had been once offered for the* “*price of our Salvation.*

In short this is the proper worship of *God Incarnate*, and of our *Crucified Saviour*: and therefore cannot be thought by wise considerers, to have been intended to be left unto uncertainty, whether we would perform it or no, or when we would be pleased to perform it; but to have been ordained as a daily Service, which should be continually performed unto Christ.

Which, in truth, the continual necessities of the Church require: it being the principal Act whereby we have Communion with Christ; and partake of the Sacrifice he made on the Cross. We are united unto him, as Members of his Body, in the other Sacrament of Baptism; wherein also his holy Spirit is bestowed upon us, as a principle of life and motion suitable to our Religion: which directs us unto this Sacrament, as the chief outward visible means of preserving our Union with Christ, by having constant Communion with him, and with his holy spirit. Whose influences he here communicates unto us, for our growth and increase in spiritual life and holiness:

ness : and we therefore , in reason , should be desirous constantly to receive , because we constantly want them ; and are too apt to start aside from him , unto whom we ought to keep our selves stedfastly united , by Faith , and Love , and uniform universal Obedience .

Put now all this together , That it is an act of holy worship ; a worship altogether as peculiar to the Church , as the Sacrifice on the Cross is peculiar to Christianity ; the only worship whereby we honour our blessed Lord and Saviour ; a Commemoration , nay , a representation of that which makes all our Services acceptable unto God ; and the principal way and means whereby we have Communion with Christ , from whom we stand in continual need of the Communication of his grace : and we shall soon be satisfied , that the plainest , and most reasonable answer that can be given to those , who ask , how often did Christ intend we should eat of this Bread and drink of this Cup , is this ; as often as we assemble publickly to worship God our Saviour . For there is no worship peculiar to him but this ; nor is there any ,

any, wherein we have such Communion with him, as in this: by which we do truly and indeed participate of the Sacrifice offered unto God upon the Cross, as the Jews and the Gentiles did of their Sacrifices offered up on their Altars.

Thus the Apostle discourses at large in the Chapter before my Text, *1 Cor. x. 16, 17, &c.* where he takes it for an undeniable truth, that Christians do communicate with God their Saviour, in the merits of his Death, by receiving the holy Eucharist. And thence proves it to be unlawful for them to partake of the Gentile Sacrifices; by proving, that to eat of their Sacrifices was to be accessory to their Idolatries: as the Jews by eating of such Sacrifices as were offered among them, *did partake of the Altar* (or did communicate with the Altar) that is, Communicate with the God whose Altar that was upon which the Sacrifices were consumed. Which evidently supposes that Christians also did in the Eucharist, partake of a Sacrifice, and were thereby joined to Christ, who was that Sacrifice. Which though carried

carried by him into the most holy place of the Heavens, there to be presented unto God, is no less participated by Christians, in this holy Feast of the Eucharist, than the Jews did participate of their offerings of thanksgiving on the Altar.

I know very well, it will be objected, that by understanding our Saviours meaning in this Institution after this manner, we prove a great deal too much; and argue our publick service to be defective, when it wants this peculiar worship of Christ, which he ordained.

To which I shall only say this, That if by discoursing thus, we prove no more than is true; our worship must be confessed to be but imperfect, when the Holy Communion is wanting: not so perfect, at least, as that of the ancient Christians was. Which we had much better honestly acknowledge, and beseech God to accept for Christs sake, of such services as we do perform, though, in some regard, and in comparison, imperfect ones; than, by going about to defend untruths and establish false notions in Religion, to make

make our selves more guilty before God.

I know also it will be urged against what I have said; that surely it is sufficient, if we every day pray to God in Christ's name, and for his sake desire our Prayers may find a gracious Audience; praising him also, as our Saviour and Redeemer and Intercessor at God's right hand: though we do not use these visible signs, which he hath appointed.

But, if this be intirely sufficient, so that our Christian worship may be justly thought intire, compleat, and perfect, without *doing this in remembrance of Christ*: then for what end was it instituted by him? Why did he appoint it, if our worship be compleat without it? Then it is as needless and superfluous an addition to the Christian Service, as we seem now, by our intire neglect of it or seldom performance, to imagine it to be.

Which, since no Christian dare say, because it disparages the wisdom of our Saviour in appointing it, if all be perfect without it; we must therefore, to our shame, take the other

ther course, and say ; that we are fallen into a state of imperfection, but hope our less perfect services will be accepted, by virtue of that most perfect Sacrifice of Christ, which we commemorate publickly, as oft as we are able.

V.

And that might very well be oftner, than we do commemorate it ; for I shall now proceed to tell you (as an Introduction to the account I am about to give, how the Service of the Church came to be so defective) that when Christian people grew less devout, yet still they did not fail to perform this peculiar service to Christ, every *Lords Day*, and *Holy Day*, at the least : that is, on those days of the Week, as you heard out of St. *Basil*, when the memory of any Martyr was celebrated. Which in time becoming the practice of many Churches, made an ancient Writer about Divine Offices (mentioned by *Cassandra* in his Book of *Liturgies*) affirm, that men employed in secular businesses, received the Communion, even in the primitive times, only

only on the Lords Days and other Festivals: interpreting, as many think, the practice of the most antient times, by the Customs of his own.

It is possible indeed that he had a better reason for what he affirmed; because we find something in Scripture to countenance this opinion, that very early *some Christians* did content themselves with so doing. For in *Acts* xx. 7. we read, that at *Troas* upon the first day of the week, when the Disciples came together to break Bread (i. e. to receive the Eucharist) Paul preached unto them, &c. From whence it should seem (saith our learned Mr. Thorndike) that in this Church at *Troas* the Eucharist was celebrated, even in the times of the Apostles, not every day as it was at *Jerusalem*, but only on the Lords Day.

For the first day of the Week being mentioned as the time, when they came together to break Bread, it seems, saith he, to stand against the rest in terms of difference; as if upon other days they did it not.

And thus much I believe is certain, that when the Church was multiplied, all

all Christians could not meet together every day: but some one day, some another; and all on the Lords Day. Which being the principal day, it came to pass in process of time, that it was the only day of the Week when they celebrated the Eucharist: but on that day none omitted it, no more than they did the rest of the Christian Service. And thus, it seems to me most reasonable to understand the matter here at *Troas*: where they did not omit the Communion on other days (for I cannot perswade my self, but that they were conformable to the Mother Church of *Jerusalem*) but such as could assemble themselves, and attend upon Divine Service daily, did receive it; and on the Lords Day all the Christians in the City came together for that purpose; and whatsoever business they had, which hindered them on other dayes, it did not hinder them on this: but they all came to do their duty to their Saviour, and make a publick Commemoration of his love.

And in this they were so strict for a long time, and it was accounted so great

great a fault to be absent, that if any persons were found not to have Communicated for *three* Sundays together, they were to be Excommunicated, and separated from the Society of the Church, by the *Canons of three* several *Synods* mentioned by *Zonaras* upon the eleventh Canon of the Apostles: which orders them to be cast out, *as an offence to the Church*, who entred into the Church and heard the holy Scriptures, but did not stay for the Prayers, nor receive the Holy Communion. Which was thought so necessary, that the Deacon who before the Communion (as you shall hear anon out of St. *Chrysostom*) cryed, *All you who are under penance, you who cannot pray (i. e. with the faithful) go out;* is appointed by the *Constitutions called Apostolical*, to stand with the Sub-Deacon, at the Door of the Church, and hinder all the rest, who were not under Penance (and so bound to Communicate) *that they should not go out till they had received the holy Sacrament.*

And unto this pitch of perfection, if not higher, our first Reformers desired to bring the Service of the

E Church.

Church. I say, *if not higher*, because in the first Communion Book of Edward VI. there is a Rubrick which supposeth *daily Communion*, not only in *Cathedrals* but in *other places*: as there is another which takes care the people should be admonished and quickned; when they are negligent, to come to the Communion *upon the Sunday, or Holy Day*. Which shows (as the learned person above mentioned observes) that they affected the frequentation of this Service, according to the primitive pattern; so far as they thought it attainable: desiring that even upon other Holy Days, as well as Sundays, it should be celebrated; in the Mother Churches, at least, as patterns and examples unto the rest. And thus much Mr. *Calvin* himself roundly declares (after he had commended the ancient custom of communicating daily, and condemned the custom of communicating only once a Year, as a Diabolical invention) that the Table of the Lord ought to be prepared for Christian people, at least, once a Week: and that all should be exhorted and stimulated (and the slothful chidden) to

to flock, as hungry people, unto such a Banquet : As his words are in his IV. Book of *Institutions* C. xvii. n. 46.

And so it is still enjoined, in one of our *Rubricks*, that in *Cathedral* and *Collegiate Churches*, and *Colledges*, where there are many *Priests* and *Deacons*, they shall receive the *Communion* every *Sunday*, at least, except they have a reasonable cause to the contrary. Now nothing, you have heard, was thought a reasonable cause in ancient time to keep any of the people from the *Communion*, except such sins as threw them into the number of the *Penitents*: For none of the rest were suffered to go out of the *Church*, but stay'd to receive it. Nay, such was the devout affection of the primitive *Christians*, while they remained one heart, and one Soul, that they never celebrated the *Communion* (as we learn from *Justin Martyr* his first *Apology*) but they sent it to those Believers who were absent (particularly to those whose bodily infirmities kept them from the publick Assemblies) that they might have *Communion* with the *Church*; and it might appear, by their partaking of the same

Bread, that they were one Body, with those who were present.

And here let me briefly tell you, that this *Rubrick* or Rule, ought in reason to be the rather observed (as it will hereafter in this and other Cathedrals) that the people who live near, or come, upon occasion, thither, may have frequent opportunity to Communicate with the Mother Church. Where anciently Christians were very desirous to receive this holy Sacrament, as oft as they could; that they might testify there was but *Unum Altare*, one Altar, as they called it, one Christian Society and Communion; unto which they all belonged, and with whom they were in Union: Particular Parishes in the Diocess, being not distinct Churches, but parts and Members of one Church, which is the Mother Church, from whence they all, in ancient time, did originally spring.

For so we find in the Monuments of the Church, that a Bishop and his Clergy having made Conversions in some considerable part of a Country, there they seated themselves, and from thence spread the Gospel into neighbour

neighbour places; who all lookt upon themselves afterward, as depending upon that one prime place, as a stream upon a Fountain: which they owned by communicating there, with the Bishop and his Clergy, as oft as it was possible for them so to do.

Thus it is apparent, by the History of the *Acts of the holy Apostles*, that the very first Preachers of Religion began in Cities; and afterward carrying the glad tidings of the Gospel into the adjacent Towns and Villages; those Towns and Villages lookt upon themselves as but one Church with that City, and thither repaired, as oft as they could, to testify their unity therewith. Especially at the *high Festivals*: when anciently there was such a multitude came to receive, that in some places the Church could not contain them. So we learn from a Letter of *Leo* the first, Bishop of *Rome*, to *Dioscorus* Bishop of *Alexandria*, in the Fifth Century: where he advises him, that when any great Festival makes the Assembly more numerous, and there meets together so great a Company of Believers, that one Church

cannot contain them, there is no question but the *oblation of the Sacrifice must be renewed*; when the first company is gone, and the Church is filled again with the presence of a new *Assembly*, Epist. 81. And St. Austin tells us (in the famous Epistle before named) that the *Thursday before Easter*, the numbers of the people were so great in some places, that the *Sacrament* was celebrated both *Morning and Evening*: whereas on that day the custom was to celebrate it only in the *Evening*.

Which as it shows the wonderful decay of Devotion among us, in comparison with ancient times, so reproves that grand error which is now crept in among us, even among well-disposed people, in many such places as this. Where the people imagine, that if they Communicate in the Parish Churches of the City where they live; they need take no notice at all of the *Cathedral* there. No; they rather endeavour, and sometimes with a factious kind of zeal, to advance the credit of their *Parish Churches*, in opposition to that great *Church*, from which they all flowed, and on which they still depend. This

This is quite out of the way of ancient Religion, which taught men to bear the greatest regard to the Mother Church, where the Principal Pastor of their Souls was seated (and thence called the *Cathedral*) and to desire with him immediately to communicate, as oft as they had opportunity, or could conveniently.

For to do otherwise, was in effect to throw off all respect to him, or very much to neglect him and his See; and was lookt upon as the principle and beginning of Schism, by breaking the unity of the Church: and in time led men to that pestilent fancy, which now very much prevails; that every Parish Church in the Diocese is a distinct Church; which hath all power within it self.

VI.

We therefore who are *Priests* and *Deacons*, placed in a *Cathedral*, should, above all others, be willing, nay desirous to comply with the Order of our Church, now recited: and not easily admit of any cause, as a reasonable

excuse for our forbearance. For, let me further acquaint you, that, after the *people* contented themselves with receiving every *Sunday*, at least; still the *Priests* and the *Deacons*, and such, as were not intangled in secular business, continued the ancient custom of receiving the *Communion* every day.

This we learn from *Micrologus*, and *Walfridus Strabo* before mentioned, and the old Book of *Divine Offices* in *Cassandra*; and from *Rhegino*, who lived not much above seven hundred years ago. In whose Book of *Ecclesiastical Discipline*, we find this memorable record; that if any *Priest*, or *Deacon*, or *Sub-Deacon*, or any other of the *Clergy*, being in a *City*, or a place where there was a *Church*, did not come to the daily *Sacrifice*, he should not any longer be accounted a *Clergyman*; if, upon reprobation, he did not amend.

And can we think it unreasonable then to be tied unto less? which is, to attend upon this *Sacrifice* (as it may be truly called, in many respects) every *Lords Day*, at the least? We should rather think it an honour, and high

high priviledge, that we may wait upon him so oft at his Altar: and look upon our selves as bound to do him honour, who hath so highly honoured us, by restoring this Commemoration of him in his Church, as near, as we can, to its primitive perfection.

VII.

And, as a motive to it, let me now proceed to tell you, that when Christian People grew less frequent in receiving the holy Communion; this neglect was attended with a great decay of holiness and good manners. As when they grew less devout, they grew more negligent in this holy duty: so this negligence produced great sloth and carelessness, in all the other duties of a Christian Life. For becoming less sensible of their obligations to their Lord and Master Christ, who bad them thus remember him, they became unmindful of the rest of his Commands; by forgetting this, which was intended for the making of a perpetual Sacrifice of their Souls and Bodies to him. As we may be convinced,

by observing what a wide difference there is between the first Christians, and us in these dayes : that is, between them who had Christ continually in their thoughts ; and us, who seldom remember him.

Then their thoughts were, in a manner wholly employed, in contriving how to get to Heaven ; and now all our thoughts are, how to get as much as we can in this present uncertain World. Then they had but one Soul, in the whole body of Christians ; and we are so many men, so many minds. Then they would lay down their lives one for another, now we kill and destroy, at least hate and bite, and are ready to devour one another. Then they were for doing all the good they could to others ; now we are all for our selves, and it is well if we be not contriving mischief, and doing injuries, or ill offices to our Neighbours. Then they feared no dangers ; but now we are unwilling to suffer any thing. Then they lived in absolute obedience to the worst of Governours ; but now we are apt to quarrel with just Authority, and find fault with every

very thing that is done by our Prince, and our Superiours.

Unto what can we more probably ascribe this difference, than to their frequenting and our neglecting of the Holy Communion? In which opinion I am not singular, for Dr. Jackson, I remember (sometime *Dean* of this Church) thought it very likely, that the Wars of Kingdoms, the Contentions in Families, the infinite multitude of Law-Sutes, the personal hatreds, and the universal want of Charity, which hath made the World so miserable and so wicked, may, in a great degree, be attributed to the neglect of this great Symbol and Instrument of Charity.

Which could not but closely knit us together in Brotherly love and affection, if the nature of it were duly considered. For that is such, saith Mr. *Calvin*, in the place before-named, as shows it was not intended to be received once a Year only, but to be in frequent use among Christians: that in a frequent memory they might repeat the Passion of Christ; and by that Commemoration support and strengthen their Faith, praise the loving kindness

kindness of God, and cherish mutual Charity among themselves; nay, give a testimony of that one to another, whose Bond they beheld in the unity of the Body of Christ. For as oft as we communicate of the Symbol of Christ's Body, we strictly tye our selves mutually one to another (by giving, as it were, and receiving a token and pledge thereof) to perform all the offices of love and kindness: so that none of us will do any thing, whereby our Brother may receive any harm; nor omit any thing, whereby we may be helpful to him, when his necessities require, and our abilities are sufficient.

VIII.

And now, in the last place, I shall further show the great necessity of this duty; by representing to you this sad truth: that as the seldom Celebration of the Holy Communion, was attended with a lamentable decay of holy Living; so thereby the Christian worship it self was no less wofully corrupted and depraved. For from hence have risen, I can clearly show, sundry dangerous

dangerous corruptions in the *Roman* Church : of which we complain very justly ; but do not charge upon the right cause.

I will mention *three or four*.

I. *first*, The Priest's communicating alone by himself, which in truth is no Communion , arose from that gross negligence , which I am now perswading you to amend.

The Church of *Rome* hath thus far preserved a right notion of the holy Communion, as to conceive it to be a part of the daily Service: upon which the people, as you have heard, attended, more or less, for some Ages. But in process of time, they, growing cold , left only the Priests and Deacons to communicate with him that ministred : and the Priests and Deacons also growing remiss, he was at last left alone. Who in some places, continued to say all the Prayers, and read the *Epistle* and *Gospel*, and all things else belonging to this Service, until he came to the Consecration; and there broke off: but, in other places , he ventured to proceed further ; and conse-

consecrated, and received the holy Communion by himself alone. Which last way of proceeding, being found most for the profit of the Priests, it grew to be a custom in the Roman Church, for the Priest that officiated, to communicate alone, when there was no Body to receive with him. For if there had been no Communion, there would have been no offerings; and therefore they continued the Communion, though there were none to communicate: nay multiplied private Masses, that there might be as many oblations as ever.

This is one corruption, which hath most certainly sprung from the indevotion of Christian People.

II. Another, as bad or worse, is this; *the giving the holy Communion in a Wafer.*

For the ancient custom being, as we read in *Honorius Augustodunensis*, for the several Families in a Town to bring to the Priest, the flower, with which the *panis Dominicus*, as he calls it, the *Lords Bread* was made; or else to join together to bring a Loaf ready made

made by a common contribution to it ; which was called their *oblation*, and the *Host* (being for the representation of our Saviours Sacrifice on the Cross) when the Church was increased in number, but grew less in sanctity (as his words are) this Loaf dwindled from a great one into a little one, according to the small number of Communicants : till at last, there being no Communicants at all, it shrunk up into a Wafer ; that is, a little thin bit of Bread, in the form of a small piece of money (the people offering such pieces of money in stead of Meal) being just so much as the Priest could eat himself, when there was no body to receive with him.

This is the Original of *Wafers*; which still retained the name of the *Host*, after it was no longer the offering of the people, nor a representation of Christs Sacrifice : these *Wafers* having brought in this corruption, that now there is no *breaking of the Bread*, in representation of the breaking of Christs Body. Though it be expressly mentioned, in the Institution of this Sacrament, where we read, that Christ *took Bread*,

and

and brake it, &c. and is so much belonging to the essence, as we speak, of the Sacrament, that the Sacrament took its name from hence; and is called in Scripture, *breaking of Bread*.

Behold here again, what Christian people have done by their indevotion.

Which hath given occasion to such a considerable depravation as this. For St. Paul speaking of this part of the Eucharist, calls it *the bread that we break*, 1 Cor. x. 16. and our Lord himself explaining the Mystery of this Bread, faith positively, *this is my body, which is broken for you*, xi. 24.

Which evidently shows, that the Bread ought then to be *broken*, or else it cannot be Christ's *Body broken* for us: and therefore that this *breaking of the Bread* is not such a superfluous thing, as the Church of *Rome* now makes it (for the Bread is not broken there) but such a part of this Sacrament, as without it, the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross are not fully represented to us.

But thus, as I said, the negligence of Christian People, in not frequenting the Holy Communion, hath maimed

maimed this Sacrament. Nay

III. The Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, in all probability came from the same original. For the Priest being left alone at the Communion, they found it necessary to magnify what he did there, as much as it was possible: that so the people might bring their offerings more freely, though they did not receive together with him. And they magnified his operation so much, till at last it brought forth this prodigious conceit; that he held the very natural Body and Blood of Christ in his hands, after the Consecration. Which fancy obtained the more easily, by the help of the *Wafers* now mentioned: which having neither the form, nor figure of Bread, nor being like any sort of food, used in the World, served to banish out of peoples minds, the thoughts of any such thing as Bread, which they received in the Holy Communion.

See here again how men have spoiled our most excellent Religion, by neglecting the constant practice of it. For this Doctrine of transubstantiating the Bread

Bread into the very natural Body of Christ, is the more absurd ; because in reality there is not so much a true Bread presented unto the Priest to transubstantiate ; if such a feat could possibly be wrought. For the best Christians, after these *Wafers* were introduced, lookt upon them as unfit for Consecration ; being unworthy of the name of *Bread*, and not being at all *broken* ; and therefore did *ad Christum & Ecclesiam nihil pertinere*, not at all belong to Christ or his Church : as *Bernoldus* a Priest of *Constance* adventured to speak, in the *Eleventh Century*. For he is that ancient Writer, whom *Cassander* mentions, as the *Expositor of the Roman Order* ; and commends, as a pious, prudent person, and well skilled in the Ecclesiastical Traditions ; excepting only the indignation he expressed at the reducing of the oblations of Bread for the use of the Sacrifice, into this form of *Wafers*, much different from the form of true Bread : which he called therefore in contempt *mites of nummular oblations* (being in the form of little pieces of money) and ascribes to them an *imaginary shadowy lightness*,

lightness, which deserve not the name of Bread, they are so thin: and inveighs against them in more and sharper words than these; which Cassander (in his Book of Liturgicks, cap. 27.) faith he, thought it not expedient to transcribe in that place. But what he hath transcribed, abundantly shows how wise and good men resented this change in the Sacrament; by reason of which the Divine Service, and the Religion of the Ecclesiastical office, as that Author speaks, was much, every way, confounded.

IV. *Lastly, This very thing hath turned the holy Communion, in that Church, into a propitiatory Sacrifice, offered up to God both for the quick and the dead. Which hath proved a most horrible abuse, having no other original than that now named: the peoples not communicating, but leaving the Priest alone at the Altar. Who, being loth to lose the oblations, as well as the peoples Company, began to speak very high things of the saving efficacy, which from this action of the Priest alone, redounded even unto those*

those who did not Communicate with him.

Which opinion being once received, as a popular conceit, men gave money freely and abundantly for private Masses; out of a persuasion, that thereby they should procure remission of sins, both for themselves and for others; both for those alive, and those who were dead.

By which things I hope you see the great mischief of neglecting the holy Communion; which hath even undone the Christian World: for it hath spoil'd Christ's holy Religion, and turned it into quite another thing; by most gross depravations of it.

Which have had this effect, even upon us, who are called *Reformed*; that they have rooted out the principal part of Gods Service from among us, and made it lame and imperfect. For the Church of *Rome*, having retained the custom of celebrating the Communion every day, but turned it into a Sacrifice for the quick and the dead, though none but the Priest partake of it; this is the use which the Enemy of Mankind hath tempted us to make of their

their abuses: to perswade our selves that so long as private Masses are abolished, we need not trouble our selves to be frequent in the Celebration and Communion of the Eucharist.

Now this is even according to the hearts desire of our grand Adversary the Devil; who can be content with such a Reformation as this, while we retain the very root and foundation of all the abuses which we have reformed: *viz.* Negligence in frequenting this Holy Sacrament. Which I hope we shall be careful also to reform at last; if men will but lay to heart, such things as I have laid before their Eyes.

Which let us see, that though the particular time of communicating be not named in Christ's Institution, yet that is no argument, we may take our own time for it, and do not offend God so it be done some time or other: but quite contrary, that our Lord intended it should be performed at all times, when we assemble for Divine Service. Thus the first and best Christians understood it; thus they practised, and transmitted this practice unto Posterity, who for some Ages continued

tinued it ; and though it be not continued till these times , yet we are forced to acknowledge , that the remembrance it importeth (as that excellent man Mr. Thorndike speaks) is so proper, so peculiar to the profession we make, that *our Assemblies never look so like the Assemblies of Christians, as when it is celebrated* : But are really naked without it ; or, at least, want the Crown of that Service for which we assemble ; that most excellent piece of Service , which is peculiarly appropriated to the worship of our blessed Lord and Saviour. By the neglect of which, the love of God and the love of one another is deplorably decayed ; and the Christian Religion also so depraved, that they who reformed it in many things , have not been able to restore it to its integrity.

And therefore now that God hath put it into the heart of our pious *Metropolitan*, to call upon us and enjoin us, to live more strictly according to the Rules and Orders of our Religion, by celebrating the holy Communion at all our more solemn Assemblies ; I hope none of us will be any longer disobedient

dient and refractory to so godly a motion: but rather forward to comply with the Command of God, and of our Governours.

It may not be in the power of man perhaps, so to command the occasions of this World, as that all should be always disposed to communicate; yet in so great a number as here come together to worship God, there cannot but always some persons or other be found, who are not so encumbered, but they may be fit, if they please, to receive the holy Communion with us. Certain I am it ought so to be; and what ought to be, may be, and will be, if the reason upon which it depends be duly considered. If it be not, so that for want of persons disposed to communicate, the holy Sacrament of Christs Body and Blood, cannot be celebrated every *Sunday*; it is a wilful neglect, for which nothing can be alledged, but too much love of this World: which arises from too little a sense of the love of our blessed Saviour, and too small valuation of his inestimable benefits.

Which I beseech you, let us awaken
our

our minds to weigh and ponder ; and then we shall make it part of our business, to contrive our affairs in this World, in such a manner, that there never want some Company at the Holy Communion. And it is no hard matter so to order things, that some receiving one Sunday, some another ; all may receive, at least, once a Month.

What should hinder, if we have any mind to it, and will set our selves about it ? what can stand in the way of such a blessed, and comfortable Reformation as this ? Of which though we have not heard a word from the great pretenders to Religion , in an Age wherein so much hath been talkt of the Reformation of the Church ; yet all the true Children of it, who understand and seek its good, are sensible, that the continual celebration of the Eucharist, and the Discipline of penance to preserve the people in a disposition fit to receive it , are such points of reformation in the Church (as the great man before-named expresses it) that without restoring these, all the rest is but mere noise and pretence ; if not mischief.

And

And these are the things at which the Order of our Church aims, for as it earnestly sighs and groans (as you read in the *Commination*) towards the restoring of publick penance (which is the only means established by the Apostles, to maintain the Church in condition to communicate continually) so it enjoins, as you have heard, the continual celebration of the Eucharist, *in Cathedral, and Collegiate Churches, and Colledges, every Sunday at the least*: which supposes it would be still more agreeable to its desires, if it were done also upon other Festivals.

Now what should hinder us, I ask again, from coming thus near to the primitive Devotion, though we do not come up quite to the utmost perfection of it? Unless it be the fancy which works in many minds, that to Communicate three times in the Year (as the Church enjoins every Parishioner, *at the least*, to do) is sufficient for any Christian. Which may well be called a fancy; since it is manifest, the Church names *three times in a Year*, as the very lowest degree of Devotion,

F less

less than which it would account profaneness: and I have demonstrated, that we have little or nothing to say for our Communicating so seldom as once a Month; but only this, that in most places it is no oftner administered.

In the Mother Churches it will hereafter be more frequently: which will, in some measure, conform us to those ancient Churches which communicated every *Sunday*. For all the Country Churches in the *Diocese*, being but parts of the Mother Church; it may be truly said, the holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, is administered once a Week, in all our Churches.

Where I beseech you let us never want a competent number of Communicants: And, that we may not, do not any longer imagine that you show sufficient respect to our Saviour, if you resolve to come thrice a Year. I wish every one were careful of doing so much; but, let me further tell you, they that set themselves such a stint, will be in danger too oft to fall short of that: And therefore it is far safer, and

and more becoming to aim at, and endeavour after higher attainments; by coming more frequently to the Table of the Lord.

Hear how sharply that great person, St. *Chrysostome*, inveighs against those, that contented themselves with receiving only at the *Festivals*, especially at *Easter*. It is in his *third Sermon upon the Epistle to the Ephesians*: where having expounded the last words of the first Chapter, which represent our blessed Lord as the *Head of the Church, advanced far above all principalities and powers, &c.* he thus begins his Sermon.

“ Let us reverence our Head; let
“ us think with our selves of what
“ Head we are the Body: a Head, to
“ which all things are subject: what
“ an honour is this, to be, in some
“ sort, *viz.* in our Head, advanced
“ above the Angels and the Archang-
“ gels? Let us reverence then this
“ kindred, this affinity, which we
“ have with Christ our Head. Let us
“ fear, lest any of us be cut off from
“ this Body; lest any of us fall away;
“ lest we appear unworthy of our re-
“ lation to him. F 2 “ If

“ If any body had set a Diadem, or
“ a Crown of Gold upon our Head,
“ would we not have laboured by all
“ means, not to appear unworthy of
“ those liveless stones ? And yet, now
“ that there is not so little as a Dia-
“ dem put upon our Head, but Christ
“ himself, which is infinitely more,
“ is become our Head, we make no
“ account at all of it. The Angels
“ reverence it, the Archangels and all
“ the Heavenly Powers do him ho-
“ nour: we only who are his Body,
“ neither for this reason, nor for the
“ other, have any considerable regard
“ to him.

“ What hope then is there of our
“ Salvation ? Think upon that Royal
“ Throne; think upon that exceeding
“ great honour God hath conferred
“ upon thee: and it will be more
“ powerful than Hell fire it self, to af-
“ fright thee into a due regard towards
“ him.

With a great many more such like
efficacious words (which I do but a-
bridge) he presses his people to the
greatest purity of life: and then, at
last, comes in particular, to press
them

them from this Argument to a religious care of receiving the holy Communion.

“ I see, saith he, many of you receive the Body of Christ, but it is rather from custom, and for order sake, than out of reason and understanding. If it were the holy time of *Lent*, saith one, or if it were the *Epiphany* (that is *Christmas Day*) saith another; who would not prepare himself to partake of the Holy Mysteries? Is it then *Christmas*, is it the time of *Lent*, that makes a man a worthy Receiver? I thought it had been sincerity of Soul, holiness and purity of Life. With these come always: without these thou hast no right to come at all. For as oft as you do this, you show the Lords Death (quoting my Text) that is, you make a Commemoration of the Salvation wrought for you, and of the benefit Christ bestowed upon you.

“ Consider then, how abstemious, how careful were they, who did partake of the old Sacrifices, under the Law. What dd they not do?

“What expence were they not willing
“to make? They were always pu-
“rifying themselves, that they might
“partake of the Altar. But thou,
“coming to a Sacrifice, at which the
“Angels are astonished, circumscri-
“best the business, and confinest it to
“certain periods of time (thou wilt
“receive it at *Easter*, at *Christmas* ;
“then thou wilt be pure and clean to
“partake of it.) But how wilt thou
“appear before the Tribunal of the
“Lord Jesus, who darest with impure
“hands and lips to touch his Body?
“For so it is: at other times you will
“not come, no not though you be
“pure; but at *Easter* you will needs
“come, though you have lately per-
“haps been bold to commit some great
“transgression.

“O the power of Custom! or ra-
“ther, O the power of Presumption!
“The daily Sacrifice is in vain; we
“stand at the Altar to no purpose;
“there is no body to partake with us:
“but then (at *Easter*) abundance of
“Company by all means will crowd
“in upon us; though as unworthy as
“at any other time.

“I do

“I do not speak this, that you
“should receive without any more ado;
“but that you would prepare your
“selves to receive worthily, oftner
“than you do: considering, if thou
“art unworthy of the Sacrifice, if
“thou art unworthy to partake; how
“art thou worthy to pray with us?

“Thou hearest the publick Officer,
“making Proclamation, *All ye that*
“*are under penance depart.* They then
“that do not partake are under pe-
“nance. If thou art one of those, thou
“oughtest not to partake: for he that
“partaketh not, is in the number of
“the Penitents. To what purpose
“doth he proclaim, *depart, all ye that*
“*cannot pray?* (*viz.* with the faithful)
“and yet thou impudently stayest, and
“dost not depart?

“But thou art none of those, and
“therefore thou dost not depart. That
“is, thou art in the number of those
“that may receive, and art invited to
“it; and yet thou regardest it not,
“thou makest no account of this mat-
“ter.

“Mind, I beseech you. There is a
F 4 “Royal

“Royal Table spread; the Angels
“minister there; the King himself is
“present; and thou standest gaping
“carelessly; refusing to partake with
“him. What a shame is this! Dost
“thou appear there in filthy Gar-
“ments, and art nothing concerned
“about it? No, thy raiment is pure:
“why then dost thou not approach
“and partake? How comest thou
“to be here, if that be not thy bu-
“siness? For all that are in their
“sins, are first thrust out: and there-
“fore thou that stayest, ought to par-
“take of the mysteries; or else thou
“art impudent and wicked too. Had
“it not been better, if a man invited
“to feast with a great person, had
“not appeared, than to come, and
“not to touch a bit of the meat? E.
“ven so it is with thee; thou art
“come to this holy Banquet; thou
“hast sung the Hymn with all the
“rest; by this very thing thou pro-
“fessest thy self in the number of the
“worthy, in that thou didst not *de-*
“*part* with the unworthy: how
“comes it to pass then, that when
“thou

“ thou stayest, thou dost not partake
“ of the Lords Table?

“ *I am unworthy*, thou sayest.
“ Then, I say again, thou art un-
“ worthy of that Communion, which
“ is in the Prayers: For not only for
“ the holy mysteries, but for the Pray-
“ ers also, and for the Hymns, the
“ Spirit descends always.

“ A great deal more, saith he,
“ might be added (as indeed he doth
say much more, which I have o-
mitted) “ but that I may not bur-
“ den your minds, this may suffice.
“ And they that are not reclaimed
“ and brought to a better mind, by
“ what hath been said; will not be
“ mended, though we should say never
“ so much.

“ And these things are said by
“ us; But, O that he who pierces
“ the heart, he that gives the spi-
“ rit of compunction, would vouch-
“ safe to prick every one of our
“ hearts! That these things may
“ be deeply ingrafted there, and,
“ in his fear, sprout and bring forth
“ fruit: so that, with all confi-

“dence and freedom we may ap-
“proach unto him, and it may be
“said as it is in the Psalms (though
“to a different sense) *Thy Children*
“*are like Olive Branches, round about*
“*thy Table.*

The End of the second Discourse.



Discourse

Discourse III.

A RESOLUTION OF DOUBTS About Receiving the Holy Communion.

THE Necessity of this Holy Duty, the high Obligations we have unto it, and the reasons why it ought to be frequently performed by Christian People, have been so fully and so plainly laid before you, in the two preceding Discourses; that I cannot but think, all that will take

take the pains to consider them, must be convinced both of the one, and of the other ; of the duty, and of the repetition of it frequently.

For I have shown, that it is a part of the daily service, which Christ appointed in his Church ; a principal part of that service ; whereby we maintain our Communion with him, and with his benefits : and therefore cannot be neglected, as now it generally is ; without the greatest offence to him, and as great dishonour to our holy Religion. Which I have demonstrated hath been many wayes corrupted and depraved, by the lamentable carelessness of Christian People, in this great office of it. Who must be perswaded therefore, if they make any Conscience of their wayes, to resolve to do this in remembrance of their Saviour, oftner than they have done.

And what impediment there can be, to the putting such resolutions in Execution, I cannot imagine ; unless it be some particular exceptions, which they, in their own private thoughts, take, not against the duty, but against *their*

their performance of it; at least for the present. For how necessary, how beneficial soever it be in it self, and may be unto others; yet unto *them*, some fansie, it is not so: but rather they ought to forbear the Communion, until they be satisfied about some things, in which they are doubtful. For while those doubts and scruples remain in their minds unremoved, they think they have a just reason to hinder them from coming to the Lords Table: nay, they say they dare not come, for fear of offending the Divine Majesty; and so perswade themselves they are as religious in staying away, as others may be in going thither.

Now these exceptions which they make against their performance of this duty, are generally drawn from one of these *three* heads.

First, From the *form* or *manner* wherein the holy Communion is now administred in our Church.

Secondly, From the *Company* to whom it is administred, and with whom it must be received.

Thirdly, From the *person* himself who is

is called upon to receive it: who judges himself altogether unfit for so solemn a duty.

Unto all which I doubt not to make a satisfactory Answer; if men be as willing to be rid of their scruples, as to retain them: but shall most largely indeavour to satisfy the last; because it is the greatest and most weighty.

I.

About the *first* of these [*the form or manner wherein the Holy Communion is administered, in this Church*] a long Discourse cannot be expected, for it is not proper in this place. Nor is there any need at all of it: but it may suffice to say a very few things in answer to it.

For let it but be considered, *first*, how *various* the minds of men are, how *weak* and *captious*, which disposes them, too oft, to boggle at every thing, with which they have not had a long acquaintance: And then you will, *next* of all, grant me, that it is impossible for any man before-hand, to know or imagine, till he speak with them,

them, what such minds will object or scruple about this matter. For some have a fancy against one thing, some against another: That which one allows, another dis-approves: and that which he disapproves, another allows: And the very best constitutions, it is possible, are disapproved by many narrow, weak, and scrupulous minds.

Now this being granted, which cannot be denied, that it is impossible, in so many several ways wherein several men wander, to trace every mans errors, find out his particular conceits, and pursue him from scruple to scruple, till no more be started, all that is pertinent to be said in this case, will be reduced to so small a compass; that there is but *one advice only*, which can be given for such mens satisfaction. Which is this.

That seeing it is certainly our Christian duty, to communicate together at the Lord's Table, in some form, manner and method or other; they that are dissatisfied with that order and method, which our Church uses, ought in Conscience, to apply themselves to their spiritual Pastors privately,

privately, and make known to them their objections against it, with a mind ready and desirous to receive satisfaction. For in an age which abounds, with such various fancies, and conceits as we sometimes meet withal, no Minister of Christ can be able to guess, before he confer with them, what every one of his flock will object to the present established way of Worship; and therefore cannot out of the *Pulpit* attempt an Answer to them without running the hazard of speaking at random, and beating the air: in guessing that to be objected which is not, or omitting that which is; and which, perhaps, he could not imagine would have been objected. For which reasons, it is impossible, even for the *Press* it self to meet with every particular exception; though a large Book should be written on the subject.

And therefore the short, the sure, and the easy way to certain satisfaction, is for every one that hath any thing to say, against the manner and form of divine administrations among us, which hinder him from communicating; to address himself to his spiritual

ritual Guide, whom God hath set over him (or to some other discreet and learned Minister of Gods Word) and to lay open his whole mind before him, that he may free him from his scruples.

Unto this every man is bound, because he is bound to communicate ; but cannot, he sayes , till these scruples be removed : which therefore he ought to endeavour to have removed ; by this means, which is of Gods own Prescription. And being used uprightly , with a sincere desire to be rightly informed, and a humble willingness to learn ; and being continued with constancy, from time to time, and not presently laid aside, because the mind is not immediately convinced ; will, I doubt not, by Gods blessing, in the issue dispossess that man of his doubts , and bring him to conformity , who seriously tries it , with patience.

II.

As for the *second* head, from whence objections are drawn against the practice

tice of this Christian duty; *viz.* the Company which partakes at the Table of the Lord; which some perhaps think unfit for them to communicate withal: I shall answer to it a little more largely.

I. And *first*, I take it to be undoubtedly certain, that no Man or Woman, who professes and understands Christianity, and do not contradict their profession by a prophane and scandalous conversation, can lawfully be denied the Holy Communion, when they present themselves to receive it. For who were they for whom Christ prepared this Table, but his Disciples? And what other rule have we whereby to judge who are his Disciples, but only by mens professing Christianity, and by their living (for any thing that appears to the contrary) suitable to this profession? If such as these may not be admitted to the holy Communion (and consequently we receive with such) then none are to be admitted; but we must turn all people whatsoever from it: and so, breaking all Christian Communion, for

for want of Company to partake of this Sacrament, extinguish the Ordinance it self, which Christ hath most solemnly appointed.

II. Now this being settled as a well-grounded truth, it follows, that no good Christian can be forward to judge others to be unworthy to communicate: but rather will be very scrupulous, lest he offend in so judging. For it is so much against the rules of Christianity, to pass such censures on others, that they who are too forward to do it, are as unworthy, for any thing that I can see, as any other persons whom they censure. Because they act contrary to the Christian Religion; which makes it a sin to be hasty in condemning our Neighbours: there being such great danger that we may be mistaken.

For though a man have contradicted his Christian profession in some things, yet this is a truth wherein we all agree; that whosoever is a true penitent, and purposes to leave those sins whereby he hath contradicted it, is, by that repentance, restored to Friendship with

with God : and therefore really worthy to receive the holy Communion. Now whether a man, whom you judge unworthy, have this serious, settled purpose or no, is very hard for you to know : since you cannot see into any mans heart, nor know what is between God and him in secret. But he coming to the Lords Table, you ought rather to judge that he doth so purpose and resolve : because he is invited thither upon those terms, and no other ; nay, required to come so prepared, or else not dare to approach unto it. For so you find it, in the *Exhortation* that is read, when the Minister giveth warning for the celebration of the holy Sacrament. And so he speaks again at the time of the Celebration, in those known words.

Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your Neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the Commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways ; draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort.

III. And

III. And that leads to the next. Our Church, you see, proceeds according to the undoubted Rule I named at first: for its Constitutions do not admit, but exclude all scandalous persons from this holy Sacrament. And therefore you ought not to depart from its Communion, when any Minister thereof doth admit such evil Liver to it; because it is his personal fault, who alone is to be charged with it; and not any fault of the Church, which ought not to bear the blame, nor upon this account to be forsaken.

Nay, that Minister himself perhaps may not be in fault: having no knowledge of the scandal: and therefore not to be blamed.

And more than this, he perhaps who complains of the scandal, is the very man upon whom this blame will light at last. For if he knew of any such notorious evil Liver, who was admitted to the Communion, his duty was not thereupon to withdraw himself from it, but to make proof of the scandal whereof such a man stood guilty;

ty ; that he might not , without amendment, and open Declaration of his repentance , be admitted to it again. Which this Exceptioner neglecting to do, his abstaining from the Communion, because of such offence, is the effect of his own negligence in another duty of Christianity. And so he becomes doubly guilty ; both in withdrawing himself from the holy Communion ; and in not acquainting those with the crimes (which he pretends for the cause of his withdrawing) who were concerned to redress them.

IV. And , *lastly* , suppose that , after information given, they, who are concerned , do not take care to redress those things, but such scandalous Li-vers be still admitted to the Communion ; yet, this not being the fault of private persons , but of those who have power to exclude them, it ought not to keep any good Man or Woman from the Table of the Lord. For there can be no reason, why any man should be hindred by this from doing his own duty ; because another man doth not discharge his. And

And let it here be seriously considered, that if this were a just hindrance, it would have hindered Christ, and his Apostles, and the primitive Christians, from communicating. For there was ill Company among the very first Communicants; *Judas*, the Traitor, in all likelihod, being there when our Lord himself administred. And in this Church of *Corinth* it is evident, there were such disorders, that many did eat and drink their own Damnation: and yet it did not hinder good Christians from partaking with them to their Salvation.

And the very truth is, if this were a sufficient reason to hinder us from Communion, it ought also to hinder us from being Christians; and make us forbear to become members of any Church or profession. For there is no Church, but consists of a mixt multitude, good and bad, and therefore compared by our Saviour unto a *Net*; wherein all sorts of Fish were caught, *Mattb. xiii. 47, 48.* and unto a *Field* wherein *wheat* and *tares* sprung up, which must grow together, till the Harvest, lest by an indiscreet indeavour

your to gather up the Tares, the Wheat
be also rooted up with them, ver. 24,
25, 29, 30.

And therefore this scruple driven
home, will destroy Christianity; as it
hath done in some places: where men
have divided and subdivided, till, by
their separation from them whom they
accounted wicked, they have crumbled
into nothing; and left no Church at
all remaining, but what was in their
particular person. That is, none: for
the Church is a Society; and there is
no Society, nor can be any, but we
may find some exception or other a-
gainst every person in it: and particu-
larly against such persons, who judging
others unworthy to Communicate with
them, abstain on that account from
the holy Communion.

For, besides the suspicion of rash
judging, and pride that is in the thing,
they are apparently guilty of a gross
sin; in not coming to the holy Com-
munion of Christs Body and Blood,
according to his Commandment. The
secret reason of which, perhaps, they
do not declare; and so others have as
much Authority to judge them unwor-
thy,

thy, as they to judge others: and, by this means, all of them, if this be a just excuse, may let the holy Communion alone.

I hope you see by this short Discourse, whither such exceptions as these lead; and therefore that you will no longer be guided by them: but, notwithstanding the faults you think you can find in any person there present, be perswaded by the weighty reasons you see for it, to do your own duty at the Table of the Lord.

III.

Where we should have more Company, than is usually seen there, were it not for another hinderance, arising, not from others, but from mens selves alone. Who are wont sometimes to say, We would come to the Table of the Lord, being convinced it is our duty; if we were worthy of so great a benefit: but we are deterred from it, by the consideration of our many sins, or great frailties. We have, at least, too many diversions by business, too many avocations by the affairs of

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this World: for I am alway in a hurry, saith one; I have no leisure to examine my self; or I am not disposed for so serious a work, saith another. We had better forbear, than be rash, say all of this sort: it is safer to honour the Sacrament by a fearful and reverent abstinence from it, than by a careless and unprepared forwardness to partake of it, prophane it. In a word, we conceive our selves to be utterly unfit, therefore we dare not come to it.

Now in answer to this *third* Exception against the performance of this duty, which hath a shew of humility in it, and looks like a pious care not to do good things in an ill manner, I have many things to propound to your consideration; which are so convincing, and will so unmask the dangerous deceit that lurks under such pretences, that they will not suffer you to be cheated by it any longer.

I. And, in the first place, every one who complains of his unfitness, and makes that the reason of his not coming to the Holy Communion, ought

ought to consider, both whose fault this is, and whether it be not likely he shall grow still more unfit every day than other; that is, be more in fault, by not receiving it. For you will not, you cannot say it is our Saviour's fault, who commands you to come, that you are not fit to come to it. Whose fault is it then, but your own? And why do you not then amend it, lest you still grow greater strangers to him; nay, Enemies, by evil works, and by continuing to neglect the means of living better?

For this very unfitness, which you alledge for your forbearing the Communion, is your sin; and will you turn your sin into an Apology, and make it serve for your Plea, for the neglect of a plain duty? Can you think that this will pass at the Bar of the Divine Judgment, when you appear before it? Dare you thus excuse your neglect of the Sacrament, by acknowledging another crime? When an accusation, a just accusation lies against you, will you then go about to turn it into a defence of your self, as you are bold to do now?

I come not to the holy Communion it is true, but it is because I am unholy ; I am sensible of the looseness of my life, which is not strict enough ; I am not in Charity ; or, at best I am Worldly minded, and too much distracted with the affairs of this life.

This is the plea of some men : who do not mind, how, after a strange manner, they make one sin an excuse for another. For this is the plain sense of their Plea, God, we hope, will be merciful to us in forgiving one sin, because we commit another, which is the cause thereof : Pardon, that is, the neglect of the Sacrament, because they neglect to fit themselves for it. For none can deny, that it is one sin not to commemorate the Death of Christ, as he hath appointed : and it is also another, to neglect a due preparation for it. And so instead of amending one, such men add another to it ; heaping evil upon evil, and aggravating their Condemnation by their very pleas and excuses.

Of which they could not be thus sensibly guilty ; were this plain truth duly considered ; *that there is the same reason*

reason to be scrupulous about this unfitness, whereof they complain, that there is to be so, about their unworthy receiving. And yet, they take no notice of the one, any further than only to make it an excuse for the other. What unjust, what partial dealing is this? What kind of Christians are these? who, if they were serious and in good earnest religious (as some of this sort would be thought to be) would be as afraid to remain unfit, as they are to receive while they so continue. They would be as scrupulous, lest they should offend God by staying away, as they seem to be, lest they should offend him by coming to the Communion. For they would see, that it is very unequal dealing with God and with their own Souls, to be very nice about the doing that which God hath commanded; and to have little or no scruple about the omission of it. What is this, but to fancy that when God commands a thing to be done by us, we may safely let it alone, if our not doing it proceed from a fear of doing it wrong? As if we did not offend him, by not doing what he bids us,

as much as by doing it amiss: and our total neglect of a duty, were not as great a provocation, as an undue performance.

Do but consider it thoroughly, and you will find there is as much cause to be solicitous about the one, as about the other. And if all they that are now full of fears about unworthy receiving, would but be fearful also of continuing unworthy to receive (*i. e.* of sinful neglect of the holy Communion) this equal fear on both sides, would make them solicitously diligent, in fitting themselves to be worthy guests at the Lord's Table. That so, they may neither offend by coming, nor by staying away: but approach in a becoming and well prepared manner; and find grace and favour with God to come every day, more and more prepared.

For by coming, as well prepared as our affairs in this World will admit, with serious resolutions to amend our lives; we grow still more fit, if we frequent it, to come better disposed to the Table of the Lord; with stronger resolutions; and consequently with

with more fruits meet for repentance of amendment of life. For by doing our duty, as well as we can, we learn to do it with greater perfection; especially if we continue to do it, though for the present with many imperfections.

But alas! will some say, we are not only utterly unfit and unprepared for the present, but it is not in our power to fit and prepare our selves, in any sort, to be meet partakers of these holy mysteries for the future.

To which, it is necessary, that I say something before I proceed further: because, if this be true, all my labour will be lost in perswading men to dispose themselves for the performance of this holy duty.

I. And here the same question might be askt such persons, which I askt at the first, how comes it not to be in your power, and whose fault is it, that you are not able to fit your selves? But I omit this, because it only throws the guilt upon such complainers, but doth not convince them of the falseness of their Plea. Therefore I rather de-

mand of such men, how they can pretend to Christianity, and say, that they cannot leave off their habitual course of sinning.

What? Is there no power in the Christian Religion to alter a mans heart; and to bring him to repentance and reformation of life? Cannot he, who, by being made a Christian, is *regenerate with the holy Spirit*, cease to follow and to be led by those carnal Lusts and Worldly desires, which at his Baptism he renounced? Cannot he, for instance, forbear habitual Drunkenness, Swearing, Extortion, and Prophaneness? Is it impossible for him to be at peace with his Neighbours? to lay aside all wrath, bitterness, and wilful animosities? How is he then born again of the Spirit? By what power were men changed and renewed in the beginning of our Religion, which we have not now, since we have the same Religion? Or to what purpose are we exhorted every day, to beseech God to grant *us* true repentance, and his holy Spirit, that those things which we do at that present may please him; and the rest of our life be pure and

and holy ; if no such thing can be obtained from our Heavenly Father ; no, not by importunate Prayers unto him for it ?

Do not, for shame, say any longer you have no power to fit your selves for the holy Communion, that is, to become better : unless you will renounce Christianity ; and declare there is nothing in it, but vain words, empty shows and appearances.

2. Which this sort of men I am sure cannot do, having something in them, which will satisfy them, if they attend unto it, that they do not say true ; when they pretend they cannot leave off those sins, which keep them from the Communion. For how can they be called sins, if it be impossible to do otherways ? And if they be no sins, how can they hinder you from Communicating ? Why do your Consciences accuse you of doing amiss, if you could not but do as you did ? They never accuse you in other cases, where there is an utter impossibility, under which you labour. For instance, if a Neighbours House be on fire, you

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do not accuse your self for not running to help to quench it ; when you lay lame in Bed, and disabled to move out of it. But if you set the House on fire, you could not but think you did him a great injury : or if you stood by in perfect health and soundnes, when it took fire, and would not stir hand or foot to help him ; you could not but look upon your self as unneighbourly, unkind, and cruel. In like manner if it were as impossible to forbear a sin, as it is to stir when you are bound hand and foot, your Consciences would never accuse you. But the upbraiding you feel there , the secret checks and remorse , the suspitions and fears , which your Consciences are troubled withal , plainly declare , that it was in your power ; and that *you lie, and do not the truth* (as St. John speaks) when you pretend the contrary.

In short, if you cannot possibly reform those sins, which make you unfit for the Communion , how come you to charge them upon your selves as sins ? If they be sins, your own Consciences tell you that you can avoid them :

them: and if you can, why do you not go about it? and by doing this, prepare your selves to do the other: I mean to receive the holy Communion; for which you will be fit, when you have quitted those sins wherein you live.

3. For the sins which you say you cannot reform, are either sins of weakness, or sins of wilfulness. If they be only such *weaknesses*, as can scarce possibly be avoided, by the care and watchfulness of good men, but they are, upon some occasions, surprized with them: surely these do not make you unfit for the holy Communion; for then all men living, for ought we know, must be unfit. If they be sins of *wilfulness*, then you do, in these very words, confess that they may be reformed: For wilful sins, in the judgment of all mankind, are such as by care and diligence and watchfulness over our selves, may be avoided. As wilful Drunkenness, is not being intoxicated, with some liquor, of whose strength we were ignorant; but losing the Government of our selves, when

we

we were aware of the danger, and could have prevented it.

4. But this, in effect, hath been said already: and therefore, to bring this matter to a speedy issue, let such as say they have no power to prepare themselves for the Communion, by amending their lives, consider; that every man hath power to do, what he can do. To say otherways, is a contradiction: for it is to say, he cannot do what he can. Now do what you can, and I will undertake, God shall not charge you with what you cannot. But if you do not what you are able; you will be charged both with that, and with the guilt of not doing that, unto which in time you might have been enabled. For God hath promised that they who seek shall find; that he will open to them that knock, and graciously answer them that call upon him faithfully. Why then do you not address your self to the doing that, which you certainly can do? for instance, call upon God, and earnestly importune him for the help of his grace (which is a thing you can do:) for,

for, in so doing, God will not be wanting to you; but inable you to that, which, for the present, it may not be in your power to do.

5. Unto which (*lastly*) let this be added, which is of great moment. You that say, you cannot prepare your selves for the holy Communion; have you ever tried? have you gone about the work, and made a serious and hearty attempt towards the reformation of your selves? If you have not, how come you to be so bold as to say, you cannot do that, which you have not yet tried and endeavoured to do? what a prevarication is this, with God and your own Consciences? though I doubt this is the case of most of those men, who plead inability; when they never in good earnest, made an experiment what might be done, in the use of such means as God hath appointed, and are in our power to use.

But if you have tried, and miscarried; why did you not try again; and after that, again and again; and that with greater diligence and care than

than before? For this you could have done ; and why should it be judged reasonable in our Worldly affairs, to attempt over and over again the same thing, wherein we haye failed at the first, in hope of better success at last: and not be thought fit, nay, why should we not be willing to use the same repeated diligence, notwithstanding such like discouragement, in the weighty concernments of our Souls?

And since we find by experience we can do the one, for we do it; we ought to conclude that we can, if we set our selves to it, do the other. For a Soul can do more for it self, than for any thing else; if it will but consider what a valuable being it is, and where its true interest lies: in the love and favour of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is the first answer to the pretence of unfitness. And what was last said, may serve for an answer also to those that complain of hardness of heart, and want of affection in the performance of this holy duty. Let them do it as well as they are able; and

and they will find acceptance with God, and grow more affected with his love. And for an Answer to those also, that say they are never the better for coming to this Sacrament. It is certain they were something the better, by their very coming thither; if they did not come without a resolution of amendment: for that resolution was a good thing, and the work of Gods grace. Which though they did not keep, they should not thereby have been discouraged from coming again, but rather have renewed it; which had been still a better thing. And they ought not to have given over the attempt, upon a new miscarriage; but still laboured and endeavoured to settle this resolution steadfastly, by constant renewals of their Covenant with Christ; that at last it might have stood unmoveable, in all those temptations which were wont to overthrow it.

This is the way of Christ; not to sit down contented with complaints of our unfitness to have Communion with him; but never to rest satisfied, till by our earnest and repeated endeavours, we be better disposed.

II. And

II. And there is this great reason to inforce such indeavours, which these complainers would do well to lay to heart: that if they be unfit for this holy duty, of Commemorating the Death of Christ, and receiving the tokens and pledges of his love; they have no cause to think themselves fit for other holy duties, which are confessed by all to be of daily use; *viz.* for *Prayer*, for *Thanksgiving*, and *praising God*: Which duties, if men be not fit to perform; they ought to look upon themselves as not fit to live in the World, or to go out of it: but if they be not unfit for these, then how can they say, they are unfit for this; since our part in the holy Communion, is wholly performed by devout *Prayer*, and *Praise* and *Thanksgiving*, with such *Faith* and *Love* and *holy resolutions* as ought always to accompany those *holy actions*? And our part being thus performed, what reason have we to think that God will not perform his; by accounting us worthy to receive those *blessings*, which he there imparts? For he is always more ready to

to give, than we are to receive: and we are not unmeet to receive, when we are thus disposed to ask.

To this purpose you may remember, I alledged St. Chrysostoms words in my former Discourse. *Art thou not worthy to partake of the Sacrifice? then art thou not worthy neither to pray: but thou oughtest to depart when the Deacon cries, Be gone all you, that are in penance, &c.* For the holy Communion is a special way of praying and making Supplication to God, through Christ Jesus: for which they cannot be unfit, who are fit to pray to God in his name at all.

No, I am apt to think that many men who pretend this, do not really think themselves unfit; but use it only as a shift to excuse themselves from the performance of their duty. For should the Minister of God upon this score keep those from the Communion, who now keep themselves from it; saying to them (as of old) *Be gone, you are not fit to partake with us;* they would take it very hainously at his hands, and be apt to reply; We are as fit as many whom you admit to partake

partake with you ; you do us an injury in thrusting us away from the Table of the Lord ; where we see those entertained that are no better than our selves.

For which ill resentment, of such a supposed judgment passed upon them, what reason can be given but this ; that they have no such opinion of their own unfitness ? For if they had, they would be pleased rather than angry, that other men are of their mind : as they desire they should be in other cases. They would be far from looking upon it as an indignity, to be told they are not fit to Communicate : it being the thing, which they themselves pretend doth keep them from the Communion. But herein they dissemble with us, and cheat their own Souls ; having no such thoughts of themselves, but are only loth to be at the pains of thinking seriously what is to be done there, and of raising suitable affections and purposes in their heart ; that they may be acceptable to God our Saviour.

This idle lazy temper frames such excuses, and makes them pretend unfitness ;

fitness; which they are by no means willing to own, if another charge them with it, but rather think they are affronted by it. Just like those that pretend to be sick, and therefore lie in Bed, when they have no mind to make or receive those Visits to which they are obliged: but would be troubled, if another should tell them they look very ill, and had best go to Bed, and send for a Physician; for they fear their case is dangerous.

III. These things seem to me sufficient to take away this exception of *unfitness*: but for the further conviction of all such persons, as alledge this for the reason of their not receiving the holy Communion, let it be considered; that there are other duties of Christianity, which are of indispensable obligation, if we hope to be saved; and those far more difficult to be performed, than the duties now mentioned, or this to which I exhort you: for which if you be not fit, as is pretended, how will you be able to undertake the other, where you will find much greater hardship and severity?

That

That is, how will you be able to deny your selves, and take up the Cross, if it fall in your way; and follow Christ in that bloody path wherein he is gone before us?

An injury will be intolerable; an indignity insufferable, to pass by affronts and abuses (which are the smallest parts of the *Cross of Christ*) will be beyond your power; if you cannot do so easy a thing as this, which Christ hath commanded in remembrance of his sufferings: whereby you are to prepare, and arm your selves with resolution to atchieve the other.

This is a thing to be seriously pondered; because it is so necessary to be able to endure hardship as a good Souldier of Jesus Christ, and perform those difficult tasks when we are tried by them, that otherwise it is in vain to pretend to the Christian Religion. For our Lord Christ himself hath said Matth. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me, &c.* Which is often repeated in the Gospel, with peremptory asseverations; that unless he do this, a man cannot be his Disciple;

ciple ; and that *he who takes not up his Cross and follows after me* (as our Saviours words are, *Matth. x. 38.*) *is not worthy of me.*

These Sayings of our Saviour show that this work of self-denial and taking up the Cross and bearing it, is not more harsh and troublesome to flesh and blood, than it is necessary to make a man acceptable unto Christ : who will reject those as unworthy of him, that are not thus disposed. Now how they will be able to go through with this tedious and irksome work, who stick at the sweet and pleasant labour of making themselves fit to receive the tokens and pledges of Christs Everlasting love ; whereby they should be encouraged and animated unto the other, I leave them to judge. For my part, I can see no hope of it ; but look upon their condition as desperate, unless they dispose themselves even for the sufferings of the Cross, by setting themselves for the devout Commemoration of the sufferings of Christ upon the Cross.

Which is so easy a duty compared with

with the other, that I may shame all those who refuse to perform it, when it is required of them, in such opprobrious words as *Naaman's Servant* made bold to reprove him withal, 2 King. v. 13. *If the Prophet had bidden thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, wash and be clean?* So say I, if our Lord should now require you to conflict with the greatest hardships, would you not obey, rather than perish? How much rather then, when he saith unto you, *do this in remembrance of me?* Which is so easy to be done, that there is no trouble in it; but all pleasure, all comfort, and joy, to think what Christ hath done for us, and intends to do. All the trouble and the pains is, only to fit and dispose our selves to partake of this high pleasure and satisfaction; of being assured that we are beloved by him, and that he will love us for ever, if we continue in his love by keeping his Commandments.

IV. Which small pains, if men will not undertake, but having passed this judgment

judgment on themselves that they are unmeet to receive the holy Communion, continue so to be; I do not understand why they should not, withal, judge themselves not to be Christian.

For all Christians are Members of Christ, a part of his Body: but how can any man be a member of the Body, and not be in Communion with the head? and how is it possible to be in Communion with the head, and yet unfit to Communicate with him? These things cannot stand together but overthrow one the other.

For they that are members of Christ, are united to him: and they that are united to him are in Communion with him, and derive continual influences from him: and they that are in such Conjunction and Communion with him, must be fit to Communicate with him at his Table. Else they are not his Friends: and if not Friends, then Strangers, or Enemies. For what medium is there between these? Or how can men pretend to be Friends to Christ, by being in Covenant with him; and refuse to commemorate his Death,

Death, which seals that Covenant, because they are unfit, always unfit to make that Commemoration?

These things are utterly inconsistent. Either we must confess we are not in Covenant with him; or we must not affirm, that we are altogether unfit, to Commemorate that Death, which confirms and seals that Covenant.

V. It will be much to the same purpose, if I add, that he who is not in some measure fit for this holy Sacrament, cannot be in any measure fit for the Kingdom of Heaven; and Eternal Life with our blessed Saviour. But it may be fit to press this a little; because the same thing, in effect, represented after divers manners, becomes the more apt to meet with, and affect all sorts of people.

Consider then, in what disposition do you think you stand for Society with Christ in Eternal Life and Bliss, in the Heavens; if you are not disposed to have Communion with him in this holy Sacrament here upon Earth? What likelihood can you fansie of having

having His Company there, if He cannot have your Company here?

That which keeps you from the one, will exclude you from the other. I mean, those things, whatsoever they be, that make you unmeet to partake of his Table at present, will make you unmeet to feast with him in his Heavenly Kingdom hereafter. The terms of admission unto both are the same (for he that duly partakes of the holy Communion, hath an earnest given him of Everlasting Bliss) and therefore there cannot be different terms of exclusion; but the very same also.

That is, those sins which exclude men from the Kingdom of Heaven, are they which exclude them from the pledge and earnest of it, in this holy Sacrament. And those sins which do not shut the gate of the Heavenly Kingdom against them; cannot be a bar to their receiving the Sacrament: Satisfy your selves what those sins are of both sorts, and you will withal satisfy your selves that you are not unfit to come to the holy Communion, unless you be unfit to enter into

H Heaven:

Heaven : and if you be unfit for that, I do not see how you can rest satisfied, if you have any care of your Souls, till by becoming capable to be received thither, you become capable to be entertained at the Lords Table.

For which every sudden passion, every rash word, every sin that is committed by surprise against the settled purpose of our Souls and serious endeavours, will not make us utterly unfit ; because such things will not shut us out of Heaven. But those gross, those deliberate and habitual sins, that bar the Door of Heaven against us, are the same that put a bar against our coming to the Lord's Table: and the same that keep us from partaking of that, are they that will keep us from being partakers of the other.

And therefore resolve, what it is fit for you to do ; the matter being come to this short issue, that if you are not fit for the Lord's Table, neither are you fit for Heaven : if you hope you are so fit for Heaven that you shall not be thrust out of it, then are you not unfit for the Lord's Table. Why then do

do you not come thither ; when you cannot stay away , without acknowledging that you have no interest in Christ and his Eternal Love ?

So the ancient Doctrine was, as we learn from St. *Austin* , who (in his first Book concerning the *deserts and remission of sins* , Cap. 24.) tells us, that in his Country they called Baptism **S A L V A T I O N** , and the Sacrament of Christ's Body by no other name than **L I F E** : from an ancient and Apostolical Tradition , as he thinks ; whereby the Churches of Christ hold for certain, that no body can attain either *Salvation* or *Life* in the Kingdom of God, without *Baptism* , and the participation of the Table of the Lord.

Which none can gainsay is thus far true, that we know of no other gates but these ; Christ hath appointed no other , to let us into his Kingdom : and that they who are unworthy to partake of the holy mysteries of his Kingdom, cannot be worthy to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven it self.

VI. If obstinacy (as he speaks a little before in that Book) did not knit its stubborn sinews, against the force of evident truth, I might here make an end. But some still persist in their exceptions and say; if we be not unfit, yet we fear we are: and how shall we free our selves from these fears and jealousies, which extreamly disturb our minds, and put us into such disorder; that we cannot compose our selves for the holy Communion?

In the last place therefore, I answer to this by asking a few plain and easy questions: upon which, if you will examine your selves, you will soon arrive at satisfaction.

Do you not make profession of Christianity?

Do you not believe what that Religion teaches?

Do you not endeavour impartially to practise according to that belief?

Do you not *discern* or distinguish *the Lord's Body*? that is, make a difference between this holy food, and other meat and drink?

Do you not understand the ends for which

which it was appointed ?

What can hinder you then from partaking of the Lords Body, if therein you intend those ends ?

Here is a sure and infallible Test, unto which, if you bring your selves, you may try thereby, whether you be fit or no to have Communion with Christ in this holy Sacrament : and determine the case with such certainty, as to be no longer perplexed with doubts and fears about it.

1. The first of these questions, need not be long considered, for by receiving Baptism, and being present at the Prayers, where the Creeds are openly owned, you *make a profession of Christianity*: and therefore you are thus far fit, and have a right and title to come and make this profession still more solemnly at the Table of the Lord.

2. The second also is soon resolved, whether *you believe with your heart, what you profess with your mouth*? For these doubts and fears, which you have, lest you should receive the Communion unworthily, and thereby incur the divine displeasure, suppose Faith in

Christ, as the Lord and Judge of the World: and that you look upon this as one part of a Christians Duty, which ought to be performed with care and great circumspection.

3. The third also need not cost you much labour; for by reading over the rules of life delivered in the Gospel, and comparing your manner of life with them; you may be satisfied, *whether you impartially endeavour to practise according to your belief?* That is, do you not willingly rest under any habit of sin, which excludes from this Sacrament, as they do from Heaven: but make it your serious business to break them all? Then you ought to use this means among others, which God hath appointed, and call upon him for his aid (without which nothing can be effected) in this sort of Supplication: for weaknesses bewailed, and indeavoured daily to be reformed, do not exclude us from either of them. But they rather require our diligence and constancy in the receiving this holy Sacrament; that we may grow strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Which we therefore want, because

because we neglect this means of obtaining it; or are possessed with such vain fears, as quite damp that Faith which should be exercised in the use of it.

4. For which fears there is no cause, when you are thus qualified; provided also you *discern the Lord's Body* in the holy Communion: that is, consider what that Bread and Wine imports, which you see upon the Table of the Lord; what they signify and represent unto you; and what spiritual grace is imparted to you by their means: which your very Catechism teaches you, *is the Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper.*

5. Of this therefore you cannot be ignorant: and if you believe it, and expect it; understanding also what your eating and drinking of that Bread and Wine means; and for what end you come to the holy Table; what can there remain to be done, to make you know certainly whether you may partake thereof safely, nay profitably or no, but only the last thing I mentioned?

H. 4.

6. Whe-

6. Whether you intend to do there, what the Lord commands ; and to receive those benefits which he there imparts ? Not eating and drinking, that is, as at a common Table, to satisfy your hunger, and quench your thirst ; not receiving with the same common spirit, and the same unattentiveness, wherewith you receive other food : but composing your self seriously, as at the Lords Table, in a holy place, where he is present, thankfully to Commemorate his Death ; to partake of that Sacrifice which he offered for us on the Cross ; to give up your selves, Souls and Bodies unto him ; and to thank him that you have the honour to be his Servants, and that he hath purchased you at so dear a rate, as with the price of his own most pretious blood ; to implore the continuance of his gracious and ready help upon all occasions, &c. If, I say, with the Spirit, and for these and such like ends, you approach to this holy Communion, you need not have the least fear of being rejected as unworthy Guests, but ought to be confident that you shall be welcome to that holy Feast,

Feast, as those that are faithful unto Christ. For wanting none of these conditions, which are all that can be thought requisite ; you want nothing to make you fit and prepared to have Communion with Christ , in the merits of his Death, which is there commemorated.

Yes, will some perhaps further object , there may be something still wanting : For how came the *Corinthians* to be so severely punished, as we read they were , for their unworthy receiving the Communion , if these things be sufficient to make men meet partakers of it ? Do you not think that they had all the forementioned qualifications ; and yet they did eat and drink their own Damnation ?

I answer, No ; it is most manifest, from the very words which mention their Damnation, that they were not thus prepared.

1. For *first*, they proceeding to partake of these Holy Mysteries , at the end of their *Feasts of Charity* (which was a common meal, where they eat and drank all together for the maintaining Brotherly kindness among

H 5 them)

them) they so perfectly confounded and blended these two (the Holy Feast on Christ's Sacrifice, and the common Feast on ordinary food) one with the other; that they made not the least distinction: but did eat this holy Bread, and drank this holy Wine, as they did common meat and liquors; *not discerning the Lord's Body*, as you read v. 29. of this Chapter. This was one horrid sin which they committed; not to consider what they were doing: for they went to the Lord's Table, as if it had been still their own Table; and did not distinguish between this Sacred and their ordinary food.

2. One cause of which *undiscerning* spirit (which would not let them see the difference) was their riot and drunkenness at that Feast of Charity; which ought to have been only a sober refreshment. They revelled upon that good cheer, which should only have filled their hearts with love to God, the Giver of all good things, and to their Christian Brethren; and thereby have prepared them to be partakers of a diviner food, which followed

followed the other. This was another fearful sin, of which you read, v. 21, where the Apostle saith, that as some were *hungry* at that Feast of Love and Friendship, so others were *drunken*.

3. Which leads me to take notice of a *third* Crime; that the rich *despised* the poor; and that in so *vile* a manner, as not to suffer them to feast with them, but to separate from them, and to eat and drink by themselves: and also to eat and drink up all the provision; leaving the poor little or nothing. *For in eating* (viz. at the Feast of Charity) *every one taketh before, his own Supper*: and so it came to pass, that *one was hungry and another drunken*.

4. Which suggest this further crime consequent upon the former, that they turned a common Feast into a private; the rich looking upon what they had brought to it as their *own*: Whereas, in truth, they had no longer any property therein; now that they were come together into *one* and the same *place*, ver. 20. Where there ought to have been no difference made between one man and another; nor any part of the

the provision lookt upon as continuing any mans *own* proper food, after it was brought thither for the entertainment of all.

5. And that was another aggravation of their guilt, that they committed all these crimes, in that *holy place*, where they assembled for the most holy action of their Religion; to commemorate the Death of Christ, ver.

22. *What, have ye not Houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, &c.* Which question supposeth, that they might in their own private Houses, have eaten their own Supper, alone by themselves, or with whom it pleased them to invite: but in the House of God, and in his divine presence, it was intolerable; because there they met upon no private but a publick account, to thank God for his love in Christ, and to testify their mutual love to each other.

6. Which they were so far from doing, that they did the quite contrary. For true love delights to keep others in countenance; but they put such to the blush, as were in a poor and mean condition, and could bring nothing

nothing to the common Table but themselves. Who were by the Laws of the Feast, and by the rules of Charity, to have feasted at the charge of the rich ; and with as much freedom and confidence, as if they had brought the provision themselves : but were lookt upon with such scorn , that it made them sneak ; like wretched Beggars , that were to be content with the scraps which the rich would leave them. That's the meaning of the last words of that Exprobation, ver. 22. *and shame them that have not* : that is, are not able to bring any thing to eat and drink at the Feast of Charity.

These were the grievous scandals committed in that Church ; some of them in the very act of holy Communion ; and all of them in their preparation to it ; and in the holy place, where they were assembled to worship Christ with mutual affection one to another. Which therefore brought down heavy judgments upon them, as you read, ver. 29. *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation* (or judgment, as the margin of the Bible hath it) *to himself, not discerning*

discerning the Lords body. Which that it is spoken of the Church of Corinth, the next words shew: which inform us also, what this judgment, (that is, grievous punishment) was. *For this cause many are weak, and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

Now what is all this to you, who are not guilty of any such crimes? For no such scandals as these, are committed among us, now adays any where. And therefore why should you fear so much as the judgment, or sentence, to suffer the grievous punishments now mentioned; seeing you are not guilty of their faults? Which I have purposely represented; as they are set down by the Apostle; that finding your selves free from them, you may not fright your selves away from the Communion, by a dread of that damnation which fell upon them. But will not fall upon you; who cannot be accused of their Crimes, nor of any other like to them: if you *discern the Lords body*; and in a solemn manner come to commemorate his Death and Passion; renouncing all your evil wayes, and being in perfect Charity with all men. Upon

Upon such God will pour down his blessings; and not plague them with Diseases, Sickness, and untimely Death: much less with Eternal Damnation, to suffer the punishment of Everlasting Fire. Which as it is not meant in the Apostles words (as I have shown elsewhere) so will not be the portion of those, who come thus prepared to the Table of the Lord: but rather of those who stay away, out of a pretence of unworthiness; when the true reason is, because they will not be at the pains to prepare themselves to partake of it. Or if it be timorousness of spirit, and a scrupulous fearfulness that keeps them from it; let them seriously weigh what hath been proved in this discourse, that they have the same reason to be fearful they shall not enter into Eternal Life; For they that are not fit to have Communion with him in these Types and Figures of him: how can they be presumed to be fit to have the immediate sight and injoyment of his Divine Majesty?

And what serious Christian is there, that can live with any comfort, who hath

hath no hope of that? How can he be quiet, or take any rest, till he hath rid himself of every thing which he thinks makes him unmeet to have fellowship with Christ, in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood; that so partaking of it religiously, he may have no cause, not to look upon himself, *as an heir through hope of Gods Everlasting Kingdom, by the merits of the most pretious death and passion of his dear Son.*

Who invites all those to come and feast with him, that abide in no habitual sin (such as shuts out of the Heavenly Kingdom:) and they ought to come without any fear of provoking his Majesty, without any apprehension of danger to themselves thereby: nay, *draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to their comfort, and high satisfaction; and to the joy of the Church of Christ: which is highly honoured, by having abundance of worthy persons in it, fit to communicate with their Lord at his Table.*

Such worthy Communicants let us all, for our parts, study to be: by resolving now, and indeavouring ever hereafter, to quit all known sins, and to

to live suitably to our Christian profession and Belief.

Then let nothing hinder you, from taking frequent occasions, of presenting your selves to the Lord at his Table.

Let no scruples, fears, and doubts, that stick in your mind, hinder you; but rather get them pulled out by some skilful hand. *Do not believe you are religious, because you are scrupulous; but rather suspect your selves not to be so, because you neglect the great duty of Religion.* And of this be scrupulous, above all other things, lest you offend God by not coming to the Communion, or rather, do not dare to be so bold and fearless, in a matter of such great danger.

Let not the fault of others who communicate, be a stop to your performance of that duty. That is, *if they sin one way, let not that tempt you to a sin of another kind:* If they go wrong on the right hand; be not you moved thereby to turn too much to the left.

Let not the danger of *unworthy receiving*, deter you from *receiving*; but only from *receiving unworthily*. Of which there

there is the less danger, if you be really afraid of it; for that will move you to be careful to prevent it. And remember, that nothing will make you more unworthy, than neglect of it.

And therefore let not the thoughts of your imperfections hinder you; for they will always hinder: and *staying from the holy Communion is not the way to be more perfect; but coming to it.*

Nay, let not the breach of your resolutions, by relapsing into sin, after you have communicated, keep you from communicating again: but rather come the sooner, and take the first opportunity that is presented you, to renew your Covenant with God, to strengthen your Christian resolutions, to fortify your selves against temptations, and to obtain assurance of a pardon for the unfaithfulness to your Saviour. *To fall is not so dangerous, as not to rise again presently after we are fallen.*

Much less let business hinder: for *if you be honestly employed in honest business, it is part of your preparation for the holy Communion.*

And let no man say he wants time to fit himself to receive it; for this, is in

in effect, to say he wants time to live well: Of which if you take a constant care, that's the main preparation. And for the composing your mind, and considering the ends for which you go to the Lords Table; *take as much time as your condition of life, and the circumstances of your condition will allow: and that is sufficient.*

Be not hindred from the Heavenly Comforts, of which you may there partake, by an opinion of the necessity of a long examination of your selves before-hand: for that necessity arises only from long neglect of the Communion.

Receive frequently, as the first Christians did; and then you will be as ready for this, on all occasions, as you are for other duties of holy Worship. For you will be well acquainted with the state of your own Souls, and with the nature and end of this part of your Religion: especially, if you take some account of your selves every day: which will make your account short and easy before the Communion.

And let not dulness and indisposition be thought a reason why you should forbear to receive it: but rather come thither,

thither, to be quickned. And if you continue dull there ; yet believe you have pleased God, by doing as he commanded, though not so lively as you desired.

Let us not hear any man say, I have not profited thereby ; and therefore had as good stay away. For it is very profitable to do our duty constantly, to express our gratitude to God, to receive the tokens of his Love, to tye our selves faster to him in renewed resolutions of holy obedience, to be put in fear of offending him, and in hope of his favour : and there is no man that with any kind of care partakes of the holy Communion, but receives more or less such benefit as this by it.

Let no fancy therefore of this nature hinder you : but oppose to them all, the necessity of doing your duty, as well as you are able. Some for instance complain of hardness of heart, and therefore dare not come : but let such understand, that it is yielding and compliance, to do what Christ hath commanded ; and not to do it, is that very hardness which they bemoan.

And if any quarrel or contention happen

happen among Neighbours, let not that hinder neither: but rather let them come to the Communion and there be reconciled. *It is too much that we have fallen out one with another; let us not fall out with our God too.*

If these contentions have risen up to heats, and anger, nay wrath and evil speaking: do not continue them by restraining holy Communion; but, repenting of the evil, extinguish all by renewing your Fellowship with God, and one with another. *It hath staid too long if one Sun hath gone down upon your wrath: be afraid to let it rest a whole Week, till another Communion day be come and gone.*

And suppose this wrath improves into hatreds and enmities, which you think you discern in some hearts against you; let not that hinder you (though it do them) but come rather and testify you bear no hatred towards them, but are in *Charity with all men.* *To love an Enemy, is the highest proof of our love to God our Saviour.*

And if you be at any time engaged in a *Suit of Law*, let not that hinder your performance of this duty: For Suits

Suits at Law, to recover or defend that which you judge your right, are not sinful; nor is it difficult to manage them without sin, with a Friendly and Christian mind: both parties referring themselves to an indifferent Judge, and resolving to acquiesce, as common reason directs, in his sentence; for *there would be no end of contention, if every man should be a Judge for himself.*

And do not say, it is too great presumption, want of humility and modesty, to be seen oft at the Lords Table: For it can be no presumption to love him very much; and to accept of the honour he doth us, in inviting, nay commanding us there to attend him: *it will rather be rudeness, and careless neglect of him, if we do not frequent it.*

And as for other hindrances, if we have some Relation or Friend that is sick, or we our selves are something out of order; or we have been in a Journey; or had a Visit to make which could not well be avoided; or had a Friend come to see us the day before the Communion (with whom we could not but in civility, spend a good deal of time) these, and such like, I am ashamed

ashamed to do more than mention ; they are so trivial : and by no understanding Christian can be thought a reasonable cause for putting by the intention, we have at any time of receiving this holy Sacrament.

I shall only add therefore, that the want of something to offer at the Communion (which the poor and needy may make an exception against coming to it frequently) is no reason to keep any body away from it. For *God who accepted of the Widow, that cast a mite into the Treasury, would have accepted her, if she had not had a mite to give ; she having a willing mind, to give him, even all she had.*

Some must receive relief out of the oblations, and it is not required, that such should make any, but only the oblation of themselves. Or if out of the abundance of their Love and Devotion, they do as the poor Widow did, offer all they have ; they may, and ought, to receive back again, out of the offerings, much more than they gave.

Let not these therefore, nor any other exceptions, keep us any longer from

from this holy duty. The ends of which, if we often call to mind, or rather constantly keep in mind ; with a resolution frequently to come to the Table of the Lord, and there to show the affection we have to him, and the earnest desire of our Souls to partake more and more of his grace ; that we may be inabled to live better and better, and get a more absolute conquest over all those evil lusts and affections, which struggle for the Mastery in us (and by perswading us to neglect the holy Communion, get a great advantage of us) we shall be well enough disposed to partake of it, with great fruit and profit, and no less comfort and joy in God : And that at any time, when an opportunity presents it self ; though we have no notice, till it comes, of the opportunity. Suppose it be, when we go to see a sick Friend or Neighbour, who is desirous to receive the Communion ; or when we come, upon occasion, into a Church, where we are Strangers, and did not know it would be there at that time administered : I make no question, it will be far more acceptable to our Lord Christ, if with no other preparation than I have now

now mentioned, we take the boldness to approach to his Table ; than if, out of a mistaken humility and caution, we turn our backs of it, and go away, because we had not so much time, as we desired, to dispose our selves for it.

For the Lords sake, let us root out those false notions, whereby we are prejudiced against our certain duty, and be at the pains to settle true Christian Principles in our minds ; with a stedfast purpose to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : and then we shall find no cause at any time to refuse holy Communion with him ; but rather be stirred up to embrace the occasion, with ardent love and devotion. Which, the more it burns in our hearts, the fewer scruples we shall have in our minds. And those few, if there be any, that remain, will soon be overcome ; when we feel what mischief they do us, by keeping us from the most advantageous means of being eternally happy : Nay, from that present happiness, which the sweet taste of His love, and of the benefits He hath purchased by his Death and Passion, impart unto those Souls,

which devoutly partake of the holy
Mysteries of Salvation. Which were
ordained by our Lord, faith Theodoret
(upon *Hebr.* viii. 4.) for this very
end; that beholding the type of them, we
may call to mind the sufferings themselves
he indured for us; and may thereby have
our love inflamed towards our Benefactor;
and expect the enjoyment of the good things,
which are to come hereafter.

Con-

Conclusion.

Thus, I hope, I have cleared the way to the Table of the Lord, so that there is no obstacle left in it, to hinder your cheerful approach unto it ; if you have any will to partake of it. And the consideration, of what I have represented in my *First Discourse*, hath, I trust, formed such a will in you : as the *second* cannot but dispose all those who seriously weigh it, to have a will to do it frequently.

Unto which I shall press you by these two Arguments, and so conclude.

I. The first is the great concern we have made show of about our Religion, and the fears we have pretended, lest we should be so unhappy as to lose it. If we be in good earnest concerned for it, why then, I beseech you, do we not take care to keep it, by being truly Religious ? Is there any reason to think, that they are troubled with fears of losing one half of the Communion, who

can be content with none at all? Or with what Conscience do they find fault with the Church of ~~Rome~~ for taking away the Cup from the People; when they themselves live as if the whole Sacrament were unnecessary?

It is a false zeal, which declaims against the Priests receiving alone; and doth not bring men to receive with him, when they may: but suffers him still to remain at the Altar, with a very small Company.

In these things we accuse and reproach our selves; demonstrating we are not led by Religion, but by humour, Worldly Interest or Faction. For no man can be thought to be truly solicitous for the preservaion of Religion; when he makes no use of it, nor receives any benefit by it. Cannot he live without the name, who lives without the thing?

If we be unfeignedly desirous to maintain the estate of Religion here established; let us seriously comply with its Institutions: and serve God duly in all its Offices: being afraid of this above all other things, lest God should therefore remove our Candlestick

stick out of its place, because we will not walk in the light thereof; therefore deprive us of the opportunities of the Holy Communion, because we have no list to Communicate.

Unto which duty let us stir up ourselves, that it may stir us up to all other. For what other way do we know like this; nay, what other way but this, for our preservation?

II. That's the *second* thing; We of the Church of *England* profess to depend wholly upon Heaven, in the use of spiritual Weapons alone, for our protection in times of danger: disclaiming the Lawfulness of taking up Arms to resist the Supreme Power, upon the account of Religion. Are we not strangely forgetful then, if we accustom not ourselves to the use of these spiritual means, for our safety and security: especially this, of which I may say, as *David* of the *Sword of Goliab*, *there is none like it*?

What account can we give of such foul neglect of him, unto whom we say, every day, *there is none that fighteth for us, but only thou, O God?* Is not this to expose our selves to be a prey unto

our Enemies, if ever they have as much power, as will to devour us ? For we openly declare, by not seeking aid continually from above, in that way wherein we are more likely to obtain it, that we depend upon nothing at all ; but are the most defenceless of all Mankind.

So they would have thought, in ancient dayes ; when they look'd upon those, as left unarmed and naked, who were not fortified with the protection of the body and blood of Christ. Which are the words of St. Cyprian who argues thus (in his 57. Epistle) since the Eucharist is made on purpose, that it may be a defence and safeguard, unto those who receive it ; let us arm those whom we would have to be safe against the Adversary (speaking of the fight of affliction they were to encounter) with the munition of the Lords plenteous fullness. For how can we teach, or provoke them to shed their blood for the Confession of his Name ; if entering the Combate, we deny them the blood of Christ ? Or how shall we make them fit for the Cup of Martyrdom, if we admit them not first to drink in the Church, the Cup of the Lord ?

Consider, I beseech you, how we in this Church profess to lean only upon the hope

hope of his heavenly grace: which is so necessary for us, that we acknowledge in another Collect, that *the Church cannot continue in safety without his succour*; and therefore pray him, to *preserve it by his help and goodness*. Shall we not then seek this succour most solicitously? shall we not implore this Heavenly Grace, with ardent cries; especially in this powerful way of prevailing with him, by representing to him, what Christ hath done and suffered for his Church, which he purchased with his own most precious blood? We abandon all care of our selves, when we thus forsake the only help we have to rest upon. Nay, it is to contradict our Prayers; when we say we have no other Hope, and yet do not flee to him, *our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*. It is, at least, a vain and senseless leaning on him, which makes us neglect him; and lay aside the principal support which he hath left us, for our encouragement and comfort in all our distresses.

If we really depend on him alone; we had need apply our selves unto him, with warmth of affection, and great diligence.

diligence. *If we rely on his help and goodness*, let us take care to please him in all things: that so we may obtain the favour, either to have the evils turned away from us which we have deserved; or to be fortified against them with such a pious constancy, that they may be stedfastly indured.

If we do not thus study to approve our selves his faithful Servants, we foolishly confide in him; against his own express Declarations, that he will not patronize us in Irreligion, and contempt of his Authority.

But if we faithfully obey him; then we surely trusting in his Defence, need not fear the power of any Adversaries: but rest assured, that he will keep his Church and Household continually in his true Religion; that they who do lean only upon the hope of his heavenly grace, may evermore be defended by his mighty power, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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